

# **ENGAGING EDUCATORS**

## **BRINGING THE WORLD INTO THE CLASSROOM**

### **GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICE**

**By Sheryl Bond, Ed. D.**

The **Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE)** is Canada's only national organization exclusively dedicated to international education: the free movement of ideas and learners across national boundaries.

CBIE's cross-sectoral membership is composed of nearly 200 colleges, universities, schools, school boards, educational organizations, government departments, and businesses.

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## Table of Contents

Preface	ii
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Background to the Guidelines	1
3.0 Best Practices	3
4.0 Broadening Worldviews	3
5.0 Identifying Your Own Resources	3
6.0 No Single Way	4
7.0 Find Out Who Can Help	6
8.0 Make Your Objectives Known	6
9.0 Get to Know Your Students	7
10.0 Develop a Climate of Respect and Trust	8
11.0 Choice of Teaching Strategies	9
12.0 Students as Originators of Best Practices	11
Acknowledgements	12
References	12

## Preface

Education has the power to change us. From the moment we learn to write our name in faltering script, read our first sentence, utter our first words in a second language, the gateway to our future is unlocked. International education opens the door even wider to allow the vast world that we live in to enrich our lives.

CBIE believes in the transformative nature of international education. We embrace the diversity of experiences that contribute to international learning, from exchange programs to second language learning to distance learning activities. We recognize the essential part that faculty members can play in generating an international culture in their classrooms.

Not all students have the opportunity to participate in what can be costly international opportunities. Faculty members can open the doors to an international atmosphere by taking full advantage of the resources available to them: international students, international visitors, Internet access to media outlets from around the world, or partnerships with researchers outside Canada. The opportunities are boundless.

Doing more with less is the mantra of this era. Some may resist change due to lack of time and resources. CBIE hopes through this guide to offer solutions that encourage faculty and senior administrators to take steps and eventually strides towards a more internationalized curriculum and classroom.

While the focus of this guide is on the post-secondary level, we have much to learn from the elementary and secondary education systems, which have in many cases led the way in the integration of international and multi-cultural learning in their schools. CBIE will be examining the internationalization and challenges at K-12 with a view to further research and guides.

We hope that faculty members will find this guide useful and invite them to contact us with their comments and suggestions for further resources that CBIE could develop for and with them.

*Jim Fox*  
CBIE President

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

For most colleges and universities in Canada, the goal of being leaders locally, nationally and internationally has, within the last ten years, involved finding ways to become more innovative. The focus on innovation allows an institution to offer a rich educational experience, which prepares students to fully participate in an increasingly *complex, diverse and globalized* world.

Internationalization has become a priority for post-secondary institutions across Canada. Failing a standard definition, most people understand internationalization to be both a concept and a process. As a concept, internationalization:

*...entails substantive knowledge about the socio-cultural content of other societies and alterations ... in how one responds to cultural differences, how one behaves in intercultural circumstances, and how one maintains one's own cultural integrity while understanding and working with others<sup>1</sup>.*

As a process, internationalization entails the integration of international dimensions and intercultural perspectives<sup>2</sup> throughout the institution. The rationale for taking these steps is to educate students who will be interculturally competent. The literature has identified many strategies that can and are being used to create an internationalized campus, one of which is the internationalization of the curriculum.

The curriculum, particularly the undergraduate curriculum, is reported to be the single most important element of any strategy to internationalize learning (Freedman, 1998). To internationalize the undergraduate curriculum does not, however, mean *more of the same* thinking about both the content of what is taught and the ways in which it is taught. Faculty members have a proprietary interest in and responsibility for the curriculum and as such they play a critical role in the success (or failure) of any curricular reform. The purpose of changing the curriculum is to change the student<sup>3</sup>.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND TO THE GUIDELINES

With financial support from the Department of Human Resources Development Canada, the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) sponsored the study: *The role of faculty in the internationalization of the college and university undergraduate curriculum and experience*. An earlier literature review, *Untapped Resources*, was supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (also published by CBIE).

CBIE members were invited to participate in web-based surveys and in-depth interviews. Over 150 faculty members and international

The curriculum, particularly the undergraduate curriculum, is reported to be the single most important element of any strategy to internationalize learning.

1. Morris (1996), p. 1.
2. Ellingboe (1998), p. 198.
3. Pratt (1994), p. 10.

student advisers/work & study abroad advisers participated. The findings on best practice inform and shape these guidelines.

Overall, the study found that faculty<sup>4</sup> in Canadian colleges and universities are, to varying degrees, engaging in curricular reform – the purpose of which is to make the content and process of learning in their discipline/field more international/intercultural. Faculty respondents raise issues including how to make the internationalization of the curriculum actually happen.

*What does it mean for me to internationalize course content and how can I go about changing what happens in the classroom?*

While the literature (particularly Canadian literature) on the question of *why* to internationalize the curriculum is growing (see Ellingboe, 1999; Mestenhauser & Ellingboe, 1998; Knight, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000; Lemasson, 2002; McKellin, 1996; Stanley & Mason, 1997) the question of *how* remains in its relative infancy. However, many best practices that can facilitate international and intercultural learning are being drawn from other literatures, especially those of multi-cultural education, adult learning, comparative and international education. The difficulty is twofold: (1) not very many faculty see their teaching practices as sources for research and dissemination. There are likely very helpful international/intercultural practices that have not been documented and/or found their way into the literature; (2) faculty tell us that they do not often collaborate with others – including colleagues and professional staff with international expertise and experience – in the design and delivery of their courses. Teaching continues, for the most part, to be the result of individual thought and effort.

Further the study found that the answer to *how to do it* depended on the context. There is clearly no one way to internationalize the curriculum. It depends in large part on several variables including discipline, class size, gender, subject matter, the international/intercultural experiences of the person and his/her ability to speak several languages.

The purpose of these guidelines is to set out and share the full range of practices which were identified by faculty who participated in the CBIE study. Our intent in identifying a range of choices is to (1) help faculty who are already interested continue to develop international/intercultural content in their courses; (2) invite a more inclusive approach to who is participating in this curricular reform; and (3) encourage faculty who are already strapped for time to decide to take a few first steps in this direction. Furthermore, the guidelines may help inform Deans and senior administrative officers of post-secondary institutions who, by virtue of the positions they hold, have the responsibility to ensure faculty are encouraged and supported in their

**Many best practices that can facilitate international and intercultural learning are being drawn from other literatures, especially those of multi-cultural education, adult learning, comparative and international education.**

**There is clearly no one way to internationalize the curriculum.**

4. For ease of reading, we will refer to “faculty members” as “faculty” throughout the guide.

effort to make a contribution to the overall success of the institution.

### **3.0 BEST PRACTICES**

Based on effective ways of doing things (best practices) reported by faculty in the study, the guidelines attempt to respond to the question “What do I do?” Organized around themes, the guidelines reflect one way in which this process might unfold (e.g. what do I do first, second, and then what?) The findings of the CBIE-sponsored study represent the current thinking and some aspects of the work of those who participated. Many best practices are likely not included in the findings because they were not reported.

*What do I do?*

### **4.0 BROADENING WORLDVIEWS**

Many faculty members see their role to include broadening the worldview of their students. We know that as desirable as living and working abroad might be, not every student will be able to leave the country – maybe not even leave their province of birth. They might not end up working for an international company in Canada. However, all students (like faculty) are living in a context where they all go home to read a newspaper. They all consume food from off-shore. They all buy clothes made in foreign countries. They all live in houses or apartments where half of the contents come from places far away. All students have the responsibility to live in an increasingly global environment.<sup>5</sup>

*How the process unfolds*

### **5.0 IDENTIFYING YOUR OWN RESOURCES**

Faculty in the CBIE study identified a range of skills and abilities they think enhance the ability of a faculty member to internationalize his/her courses.

#### **KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS NEEDED BY FACULTY**

- Ability to work with the system and with other people
- Ability to look at issues and problems without bias
- Ability to create classrooms open to dialogue from students
- Awareness of ESL challenges and methodologies that could help students
- Communication skills
- Concern for other peoples and cultures
- Cultural sensitivity, appreciation and concern for other cultures and histories
- Curiosity and interest in learning
- Desire to keep oneself fluent with current events
- Foreign language skills
- Highly motivated
- Knowledge of (Global) colleague networks

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5. CBIE study: interview #10

- Good listener
- Good role model
- International experience (e.g. studying/working in another country/culture, attending international conferences, involved in international research, traveling)
- Interest in teaching with an international perspective
- Open-mindedness
- Research skills
- Willingness to accept new and different information
- Willingness to adapt and put in extra work
- Willingness to share with students

The assumption is the more of these attributes you possess, the more likely you will be able to successfully undertake the internationalization of your courses. Many if not most of these attributes are, however, also important in other kinds of curricular and pedagogical reform.

Other attributes have been shown to contribute to the overall effort to internationalize the curriculum. Your own cultural heritage, international experience and expertise, and your competencies in a foreign language can make a substantial difference, particularly when you are prepared to reflect on the ways in which your own personal history has shaped who you are and how you have designed the course.

### *Knowledge and skills*

## **6.0 NO SINGLE WAY**

Once the decision is made to internationalize the curriculum, the ways to go about making it happen in the course and classroom are not the same for everyone. There are choices to be made.

- Knowledge is socio-cultural and not just disciplinary

The development of a plan for teaching and learning should result in the curriculum as a whole being more than the sum of its parts.<sup>6</sup> This is a question about the “gestalt” of the course. The answer connects an individual course with a program of study, and the international/intercultural objectives of the curriculum with institutional priorities. Study findings suggest that to approach curriculum design with the purpose of integrating an international/intercultural dimension requires that faculty believe, in some way, that knowledge is socio-cultural as well as disciplinary. Depending on the perspective of the discipline, acceptance of this position may be natural and easy or uncomfortable and not acceptable. An example comes from the study.

*We tend to hold that scientific principles underlying our curriculum are universal and thus transcend the notion of internationalization. (154)<sup>7</sup>*

**Your own cultural heritage, international experience and expertise, and your competencies in a foreign language can contribute to the overall effort to internationalize the curriculum.**

6. Freedman (1996), p. 2.

7. Commentary from the surveys and summarized data from the interviews are identified by participant code

*I attempt to work in international perspectives at least to counteract the tendency to believe that there is only one way to accomplish our objectives. (126)*

While disciplinary orientation plays an important role, it is likely that people will find ways to participate in internationalizing their courses if they believe that knowledge has a socio-cultural as well as disciplinary base.

- Choosing the approach that will work best

There are several different approaches being used by faculty to internationalize their course(s). Based on very different assumptions, three approaches are:

- (1) The *add-on* approach
- (2) The curricular *infusion* approach
- (3) The *transformation* approach

The *add-on* approach is considered by most educators to be the easiest approach but with the most narrow perspective. Examples of the add-on approach include inviting a guest speaker to give a lecture or lead a discussion on an international or intercultural issue. It can be as simple as adding on a reading, or an assignment. This approach allows the main body of the course to remain untouched and unquestioned.

*Infusing* intercultural knowledge, attitudes and skills into the curriculum requires much more preparation on the part of the faculty member and can generate many more rewards. Examples of the infusion approach to curriculum change include:

- (1) Rethinking course goals to include intercultural issues and approaches
- (2) Selecting course readings and material that reflects diverse points of view on events/topics/issues
- (3) Bringing student experiences into the course as a means to enrich learning

The last of the three approaches is more difficult to undertake. Unless the discipline itself has deeply embedded intercultural or comparative approaches to knowledge, its construction as well as its assessment, the *transformational* approach requires a shift in the way we understand the world. As an approach to curriculum reform, transformation is realized much less frequently but it has the potential to change people.

The focus of this approach is to enable students to move between two or more worldviews. Study abroad programs that require students to become immersed in another culture are good examples of the transformative

approach. This method is much more difficult to create at home where one dominant culture is so pervasive. Faculty members in agriculture and disciplines that are named international (e.g. international business) reported this approach was a regular feature of their programs.

## 7.0 FIND OUT WHO CAN HELP

The major obstacle to curricular reform, as reported by faculty in the CBIE study, is the lack of authority to simply stop doing what is already expected. This would allow time to dedicate the necessary thought and effort to explore what is required to internationalize the curriculum. To compound the difficulties often encountered in just “getting going”, most faculty reported they are not likely to collaborate with departmental colleagues or anyone else on campus (such as international student advisers or work & study abroad advisers) when they make choices about course content and teaching strategies. Faculty members are on their own with their own resources to support them.

Given how little time there is available to undertake curricular revision/reform, collaboration becomes very important. As you are preparing your course design, identify at least a few people who will by virtue of their experience and expertise broaden yours.

Effective practices include:

- Find out what your International Student Office and other campus services can offer you
- Collaborate with colleagues at home and abroad
- Join networks of faculty who teach the same or similar courses in Canada and outside North America
- Make good use of international guest speakers who are on campus
- Identify colleagues who have international experience and expertise
- Find out if any of the student groups have resources

## 8.0 MAKE YOUR OBJECTIVES KNOWN

Once you have decided to integrate an intercultural/international dimension in your courses and teaching, ensure these objectives are explicit in your course outlines and in class. The more often students hear you say it, the more likely they will believe you are sincere. If your students have always been in traditional lecture classes, they may not understand what you are trying to do at the start. It takes time.

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**Given how little time there is available to undertake curricular revision/reform, collaboration becomes very important.**

## 9.0 GET TO KNOW YOUR STUDENTS

Student demographics are changing. You are more likely to have students with international and intercultural experience in your class than you ever did before. While the numbers of international students who are registered in degree programs is, overall, quite small, there is considerable institutional variation in the numbers of international students present on campus.

**Students can make a significant contribution to internationalizing the course.**

Keeping in mind that international students are not a homogenous group, there are many students, whose personal, educational, cultural, and family situations make it likely they bring international/intercultural experiences and competencies into the class. Students can make a significant contribution to internationalizing the course. Faculty identified a range of students who have been in their courses and who have made this kind of contribution. Included are:

- Recent immigrants
- Canadian students who have been raised in multicultural contexts
- International students in second-language programs
- Canadian students who have traveled extensively in other countries
- Aboriginal students
- Exchange students who have come to Canada
- Student groups/NGOs with an international experience component to their program
- Canadian students who have been studying abroad and have returned to complete their degree

A faculty survey respondent illustrates how rich the classroom context has become:

*In a class of 60, I ask how many have traveled to a country outside of North America, 3/4 of the hands go up. I ask how many have lived in another country for more than six months, more than 1/3 of the hands go up. That did not happen before but it does now. (10)*

Knowing who has international/intercultural experience is not something one can determine with eyes and ears. We need to ask. Getting to know your students and inviting them to share their knowledge and expertise with you and other students is the first step.

*I make sure I quickly get a profile of who they are in the first two days. Then I start to work with some who have had international experience and get them involved by day three. It just keeps building... the intercultural agenda is right up front. (Int: 11)*

Effective ways of getting to know students very early in a class include:

- Develop a handout asking students to tell you about themselves
- Invite students to tell you about other cultural contexts/countries where they have lived or studied
- Inquire about which teaching strategy gives them the best chance to learn and demonstrate competence

## 10.0 DEVELOP A CLIMATE OF RESPECT AND TRUST

If you want learning to be interactive and relational, it is important to develop a climate of respect and trust among all members of the class right from the start. Without trust, students are not likely to take risks. Talking about themselves may be considered very risky for some.

- Tell your students about yourself, your cultural background and your international experiences
- Discuss the international and intercultural objectives of your course and your reasons for including them
- Invite all students to contribute their own experiences as they relate to the course. This allows you and other students to learn from others.
- Find out how many students have lived or worked abroad, have family members who have done so, or who hope to do so in the future
- Disclose the languages you speak, even a little (see CHAT)
- Find out how many languages are spoken by people in the class; by their parents or relatives

There are lots of ways to get to know your students. Make sure you do not invade students' privacy. Be careful about stereotyping. If you want students to talk about themselves, start with yourself. Be aware you have more power than they do.

Here are some ways that have been used successfully:

- Tell your students about yourself. Ask students to tell you and the other students about themselves.
- Invite students to identify different kinds of educational experiences they have had.
- Ask in how many different cities/countries your students have lived.
- Be careful not to single out international students as different or exotic. The purpose is to get to know all of your students.

In some faculties, students complete a short report on their international/intercultural experiences, which is given to faculty who teach their courses.

**If you want students to talk about themselves, start with yourself. Be aware you have more power than they do.**

*Get to know your students*

*All faculty are notified when they have a returning exchange student in their class. Returning exchange students are given the responsibility for trying to bring up their new international perspective in their classes when it is appropriate. They submit a diary of the instructor's response to the Dean's Office. Faculty receive feedback from the Dean on the ways in which students reported their experiences were valued in the class. Outstanding faculty are publicly recognized. (78)*

When faculty began to identify ways in which they got to know their students, many urged caution not to use “difference” as the focus. International students have reported they experience penalties for being different.

**Without trust students are not likely to take risks. Talking about themselves may be considered very risky for some students.**

- Take care to ensure that all students are invited to participate. Don't separate international students from other students.

*I think it marginalizes one from the other. I am careful to involve the many mixed perspectives. It is worthwhile to engage them all. (11, 20)*

## **11.0 CHOICE OF TEACHING STRATEGIES**

Findings on the preferred teaching styles of faculty in colleges and universities suggest that the lecture mode remains the pedagogy of choice of most males and some females.<sup>8</sup> The limitations of the lecture method<sup>9</sup> have been broadly discussed in the literature. As a teaching strategy, lecturing is very efficient for conveying large amounts of information quickly but it does not allow for the kind of “deep” learning which is necessitated by inclusion of international and intercultural dimensions in the course and classroom. Deep learning is likely to occur when there is:<sup>10</sup>

- (1) Positive motivational environment
- (2) High degree of learner activity
- (3) Interaction with others, peers as well as faculty members
- (4) Well structured knowledge base

The lecture, with its one-way flow, does not allow students to work out their own understandings under conditions described above. Effective practices identified by faculty in the study include those outlined on the following page.

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8. Most women reported using group discussion, critical thinking and problem solving as teaching strategies. Most men reported using lectures, group discussion, and problem solving strategies.

9. Biggs (1989), p. 17.

10. *ibid*, p. 17.

- Experiential learning

The more meaningful engagement of students with course content and with each other, the more open they are to critically assessing their own assumptions, attitudes and beliefs. Immersion situations produce the best type of experiential learning. There is, however, a range of teaching strategies that can be used to produce some of the rich learning that usually occurs when students (and faculty) have lived in other cultures.

Other suggested strategies:

- Use current issues whenever possible to contextualize your course content
- Have students listen to international news channels to better understand how diverse cultures see an event differently
- Use experiential learning whenever possible (e.g. field-based assignments, group work, case studies); the more active the learning the better

While group work has the potential to enhance learning, students who look different or speak differently may be at a disadvantage.

- Effective group work/assignments require students receive preliminary training in order to know what is expected and how to handle issues such as conflict or non-participation
- If you use group work, structure the membership to be diverse
- Working with students, construct a rubric for assessment of group work
- Encourage students to assess each other's contributions
- Overall assessment should be on the product and processes of the group
- Assess group work based on individual effort
- Create assignments which build on students' background knowledge and experience
- Encourage your students to think critically and abstractly
- Be prepared to explore one issue from many different perspectives

Regardless of which approach to curriculum change you use (add-on, infusion, transformation) the construction of assignments will reflect your beliefs about what is important for your students to know.

- Assignments

Some of the most diverse thinking was reported by faculty about the construction of assignments. They anticipated contexts in which a teacher would have little or no diversity in the class and situations where diversity was rich.

**The more meaningful engagement of students with the course content and with each other, the more open they are to critically assessing their own assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs.**

In classes where students are indeed homogenous, it is still possible to internationalize the course. For example:

- An assignment could include an interview with an international student on campus about the topic you have assigned. They would report back what they learned to the whole class. If there are no international students on campus, the assignment could be to speak with someone in the family/community with international expertise.
- International students could be invited to come into class and work with students on a particular feature of the guest's home country/culture.

In courses where diversity (including languages) is present, there are other ways to enrich learning.

- Team up students in dyads making sure students with international experience and expertise work together whenever possible.
- Assign the students to listen to different radio programs from around the world. Pick a current issue and have the students record the ways in which different countries/cultures present news coverage.
- Taking a current event from the news, ask students individually to identify what they think is important about the event. In all likelihood, students from different parts of the world will interpret the meaning of the event differently.
- Ask your students to come up with a way to make the course more intercultural/international. If possible use as many of the ideas as is reasonable in that term. Other ideas can be integrated the following year.

It is relatively easy to add on an assignment that has an international or intercultural perspective.

## 12.0 STUDENTS AS ORIGINATORS OF BEST PRACTICES

A few best practices identified originated from students. There are, of course, student organizations and NGOs whose focus is on international or intercultural issues. One group of undergraduate students has developed a way to encourage and support the use of different languages on campus – making the campus move inclusive.

They designed a button and a logo, CHAT<sup>11</sup> that is made available to any student on campus. Each different color of button identifies a different language. Wearing the button invites students and faculty to speak with you in the language of your choice. No fluency needed, just motivation and interest.

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11. [www.campuschat.ca](http://www.campuschat.ca) (or contact [slb2@post.queensu.ca](mailto:slb2@post.queensu.ca))

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We also acknowledge the contribution of the Canadian International Development Agency for the publication of *Untapped Resources: Internationalization of the Curriculum and Classroom Experience: A selected literature review*.

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## NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

As the researcher of both the study cited above and these guidelines, I welcome hearing from faculty members who are willing to share their practices. Any information received will be shared. Please email me at: slb2@post.queensu.ca