

TEACHERS AND INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT:

Teachers play a key role in shaping the changes in academic international education: designing new curricula, developing course material, implementing the new programs and guiding graduate students from a diversity of backgrounds. In order to support academic staff in their teacher professional development it is important to understand the context they are working in and their challenges and major concerns. The Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC) of the University Twente provides international postgraduate education, research and project services in the field of geo-information science and earth observation using remote sensing and GIS. As a starting point for future research on teacher professional development at the Faculty ITC an exploratory survey has been carried out on teacher's experiences in international education in two related institutions. The role of teachers is placed in the framework of the internationalization of higher education in the Netherlands.

1. INTRODUCTION

In order to support academic staff in their teacher professional development it is important to understand the context they are working in and their challenges and major concerns. The Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC) of the University Twente provides international postgraduate education, research and project services in the field of geo-information science and earth observation using remote sensing and GIS. The faculty is has long standing experience in international education and is actively involved in innovative teaching and cross-border education including, student-centred learning, project education, e-learning and joint education.

Operating in and international higher education environment is a key aspect of the day-to-day work of academic teachers at ITC. Since the recent internationalisation of higher education in most Dutch and other European universities this has affected the position of ITC and consequently the working context of its teachers.

Teachers play a key role in shaping the changes in academic international education: designing new curricula, developing course material, implementing the new programs and guiding graduate students from a diversity of backgrounds. Who are these teachers? How do they teach their international classroom? What are their main concerns? And how do they respond to the changes in international higher education and the process of globalisation?

As a starting point for future research on teacher professional development at the Faculty of ITC, a literature search and an exploratory survey has been carried out. In this case teacher's experiences in international education have been taken as starting point. Accordingly the paper aims to investigate the developments in international higher education and the experiences of teachers working in this domain.

The paper starts with an overview of the major trends that affected international higher education in the Netherlands. This followed by the explanation of the research carried out, the outcome, conclusion and discussion.

2. INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

Internationalization in higher education became a key issue in Europe in the 1990's (Teichler, 2004) and at the moment all Dutch higher education institutions offer international programs. Internationalisation has become mainstream at all institutes of higher education (Van der Wende, 2001). But this has not always been the case. Some major developments contributed to the development of international higher education in the Netherlands.

2.1 Higher education in the Netherlands

The Netherlands has two main types of higher education institutions: research universities and universities of applied sciences. Research universities include general universities, universities specializing in engineering and agriculture, and the Open University. Universities of applied sciences include general institutions as well as institutions specializing in a specific field such as agriculture, fine and performing arts, or teacher training. Whereas research universities are primarily responsible for offering research-oriented programs, universities of applied sciences are primarily responsible for offering programs of higher professional education, which prepare students for particular professions. A third, smaller branch of higher education is provided by institutes for international education, which offer programs designed especially for international students (Nuffic, 2010)

2.2 Development assistance in higher education

Internationalization in the Netherlands was for many years the exclusive responsibility of some international offices and the

institutes for international education. These institutes are traditionally serving the Dutch development cooperation and were founded in the 1950's (Nuffic, 2010). Almost all European countries, but particularly those in Northern Europe, provide specific programs for development assistance in higher education (Teekens, 2004). Many of these countries, like the Netherlands, have historical links with universities in Africa, Asia or Latin America.

The institutes of international education in the Netherlands are organised under the umbrella of SAIL (Council of Institutes for Postgraduate International Education in the Netherlands). They offer specialised programs aiming at capacity building and institutional strengthening in and for developing countries. The SAIL network comprises five higher education institutes:

- Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS), Erasmus University
- Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC), University Twente
- Institute of Social Studies of the Erasmus University (ISS)
- Maastricht School of Management (MSM)
- UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education (UNESCO-IHE)

These institutions depend for their funding for a large part on the Dutch development cooperation, through the Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education (Nuffic). The Netherlands Initiative for Capacity development in Higher Education (NICHE) is since 2010 the leading program in the Netherlands (Nuffic, 2010).

Due to the process of internationalisation (see 2.3) and related policy changes, these centres of specialised higher education are losing their unique position in the Dutch international higher education. Most had to give up their independent status, and became embedded in other organisational structures, like a university (IHS in 2004, ISS in 2009 and ITC in 2010); IHE became an UNESCO institute in 2003.

2.3 Internationalisation

More recently all Dutch Universities faculties have become increasingly engaged in international education. Internationalization in higher education became a key issue in Europe in the 1990's (Teichler, 2004). An open European space for education was considered as a key factor in building a united and competitive Europe, characterized by internal solidarity and openness to the world. Mobility and cooperation are therefore now important features of many European education programs (Teekens, 2004). Funding programs such as ERASMUS, SOCRATES, LEONARDO and TEMPUS promote the internationalisation of Europe's higher education institutions. The 1999 Bologna Declaration has been a major driving force for the recognition and integration of internationalization at national universities (Van der Wende, 2001). In reality the ERASMUS program and the Bologna Process are phenomena of Europeanisation (Teichler, 2004). Since 2003 the Erasmus Mundus programma supports European higher education beyond Europe (Teekens, 2004). Erasmus Mundus is a co-operation and mobility programme in the field of higher education intended to promote the European Union as a centre of excellence in learning around the world.

2.4 Cross-border education

The term cross-border education is often used in relation to international higher education. Cross-border higher education

refers to the movement of people, programmes, providers, curricula, projects, research and services in tertiary (or higher) education across national jurisdictional borders. Cross-border education is a subset of educational internationalisation and can be part of development cooperation projects, academic exchange programmes and commercial initiatives (OECD, 2007). Cross-border higher education may include higher education by public/private and not-for-profit/for-profit providers. It encompasses a wide range of modalities, in a continuum from face-to-face (taking various forms such as students travelling abroad and campuses abroad) to distance learning (using a range of technologies and including e-learning).

2.5 Globalisation

According to Teichler, 2004, internationalisation is losing ground to 'globalisation'. Globalisation tends to assume that borders and national systems get blurred or even disappear (Teichler, 2004) and is supported and advanced by technological developments, mainly ICT, and the increased liberalization of trade and markets (Teekens, 2004). Beerkens (2004) defines globalisation of higher education 'as a process in which basic social arrangements within and around the university become disembedded from their national context due to the intensification of transnational flows of people, information and resources.' One difference between globalisation and internationalisation is whether national systems become more *integrated* as suggested by globalisation, or more *interconnected* as with internationalisation (Beerkens, 2004).

“Even as they share in the reinvention of the world around them, higher education institutions, and the policies that produce and support them, are also being reinvented. For the first time in history every research university is part of a single world-wide network and the world leaders in the field have an unprecedented global visibility and power. Research is more internationalised than before and the mobility of doctoral students and faculty has increased. The specifically global element in academic labour markets has gained weight, especially since the advent of global university rankings.”
In: Marginson, S. and M. v. d. Wende (2007). Globalisation and Higher Education. OECD Education Working Papers. Paris, OECD.

2.6 Internationalisation at home

In this context it is worthwhile to mention the development of 'Internationalisation at Home'. (Teekens, 2004). Global issues are important not only for mobile or cross-border students, but also for 'domestic' students. A curriculum aiming at internationalization at home will focus on strengthening the student's international competence and the student's intercultural competence. This can be achieved at home where foreign students mix with domestic students and intercultural learning can take place.

2.7 The international classroom

Due to the process of internationalization and globalisation teachers and students find themselves increasingly operating in “an international classroom”. The term ‘the international classroom’ refers to ‘courses where the mix of international and domestic staff and students is an essential factor in designing both content and delivery of the curriculum’ (Teekens, 2004). In its policy papers and guidelines, the Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education (Nuffic) has embraced the international classroom concept to promote the internationalisation of higher education.

One of the main features of the international classroom is its intercultural learning environment. Or as stated by Teekens (2004): ‘In the context of internationalization the impacts of cultural diversity, embedded at the level of institutional structures and processes as well as at the level of educational interaction and outcome, are essential elements of the international classroom and must be considered a fundamental precondition for all institutional and educational measures designed to create a truly international academic community’

2.8 Concluding remarks

In conclusion the definition by Teekens (2004) describes best internationalization in higher education: ‘the sum total of proactive institutional measures to enhance and facilitate the complex processes that create a truly international academic community in a higher education institution – a community which prepares students to function in a globalised working and living environment.’

Internationalisation has shifted from a marginal activity for most universities to a central institutional issue with strategic importance for all universities (van der Wende 2001, Teichler, 2004). ITC has to re-position itself from being one of the few international higher education institutions to be one of many university faculties offering international (master) programs in the Netherlands.

3. CASE STUDY

In chapter 2 the developments in international higher education with reference to the Netherlands have been pictured. Chapter 3 will zoom in on teachers involved in international higher education. A small exploratory study has been carried out by using a case study approach. The aim of the exploratory study is to get insight in the role and experiences of teachers in international education.

3.1 Methodology

Two research cases were selected, both related to ITC although in a different manner. One case is the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS), like ITC a traditional international education institute. The second case is the Faculty of Engineering Technology (CTW) of the University Twente; a sister-faculty of ITC since its merger with the University Twente.

From each institute one teacher and manager from the international office were interviewed. The in depth interviews were held with at each of the institutes in February and March

2010. This paper describes and reflects on the outcome of the teachers’ interviews.

The interviews had a duration of 1 ½ hour and were recorded for analysis afterwards. The following questions gave structure to the interviews: What is your role in teaching in the international higher education? What makes it interesting for you to teach international students? What are the challenges and major difficulties in teaching international students? How are you supported in developing your teaching competencies in a changing international and more and more global learning environment? After the interviews the researcher noted down the complete interview. Both recordings and written texts were used for analysis.

3.2 Case description

Profile Teacher 1. The first interviewee is an experienced lecturer at the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS) of the Erasmus University Rotterdam. She has over 10 years of experience as an urban sociologist and solid waste management expert in various projects and assignments in countries in the South as well as in training and research activities in The Netherlands. She conducted various consultation missions to India, the Philippines, Indonesia, Egypt, Zambia, Albania and Brazil. She is responsible for teaching and coordination of the specialisation Urban Environmental and Infrastructure Management, of the Master Course in Urban Management and Development. Next to her teaching tasks she is highly involved in consulting.

IHS is a leading international knowledge center with 50 years of experience in applied knowledge for urban management and development. Operating on a global scale, IHS offers post graduate education, training, advisory services and applied research. Over 6,500 participants have attended IHS courses (<http://www.ihs.nl/>)

Profile Teacher 2. The second teacher is a young university lecturer at the Faculty of Engineering Technology (CTW) of the University Twente. From 1995 he has been student assistant working as mentor for international students. From 2001 he is involved in international higher education as a lecturer and contributed to the development of an international joint master course together with the University of Dortmund. After some years this joint course has been abandoned, but cooperation and student exchange continued within the framework of the Erasmus programme. At the moment he is teaching in the Master Mechanical Engineering, specialisation Industrial Design, for which he developed both a Dutch and international course. His faculty applies a Problem-based Learning approach.

The University Twente is a regional university in the East of the Netherlands. The faculty CTW is one of the six University of Twente's faculties. The faculty combines Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering and Industrial Design Engineering. The faculty has approximately 1800 bachelor's and master's students, 300 employees and 150 PhD candidates. The faculty has about 10 years experience in international higher education (<http://www.universiteittwente.nl/education/ctw>)

4. RESULTS

4.1 The students, the curriculum and the teaching approach

Teacher 1.

The Students

The audience in the classroom consists of a group of international students mainly from developing countries or countries in transition, with some students from developed countries; it is a complete mixed group. Most students are mid-career professionals.

The curriculum

The curriculum is international in content and context, and aiming at capacity building in the target countries. It is developed based on country needs and constantly up-dated to fit the needs of the target group. The course and all communication at the institute are in English. The IHS course scores high in the evaluations of the Erasmus University.

The learning approach

The course is based on a case-study approach: the lectures are based on country case studies, with group work and role plays. Thesis work is carried out in students' own country based on relevant subject.

Teacher 2.

The students

Some international students in a group of Dutch students (e.g. 2 international students and 40 Dutch students): Dutch university class with some international students. Most Dutch students are BSc graduates from the same university. In his international course the balance is somewhat better.

The curriculum

The teacher has developed an international course and regular Dutch course. 'International' means that the regular course is offered in the English language; the content is identical to course for Dutch students. Both streams have to accept international students. High quality he considers important; international students should not affect the performance of Dutch students.

The learning approach

The faculty applies a Problem-Based Learning approach since 2005, involving a lot of group work, critical reflection and presentations; this also applies for the international students.

Conclusion

Although both teachers are involved in international higher education their classrooms are very different as is illustrated by the schematic representation in figure 1. The teacher at IHS addresses a complete international classroom (multi-colour) and also the curriculum is international (multi-colour) in nature. In the international classroom at the Faculty of CTW of the University Twente (B) most students are Dutch (blue) and the curriculum is developed for serving the Dutch students (blue).

The teachers apply different learning approaches, but both approaches involve group work.

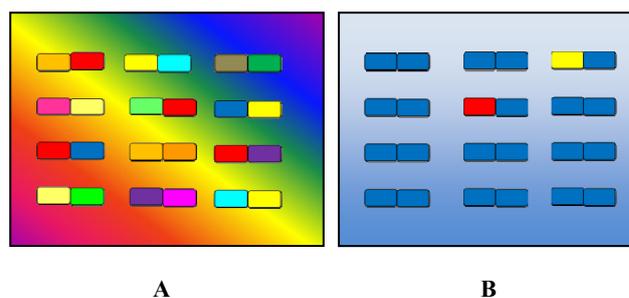


Figure 1. Schematic representation of the international classroom of teacher 1 (A) and teacher 2 (B)

4.2 The teacher – student relation

Teacher 1.

She considers it very rewarding to teach international students: they are very motivated to learn and bring many experiences from which she can learn as well. IHS is a relatively small institute. The teacher has close contact with the students. According to the teacher this close contact supports deeper learning. Students can even approach her after working hours and annually they are invited at her home to celebrate the typical Dutch event Sinterklaas. After some complaints about her other tasks at the institute, she stated: 'Education is our core business!'

Teacher 2.

Teaching and developing a course in English and working with international students was a big challenge for this teacher. After his initial enthusiasm he is now more critical about international courses at his faculty.

More than traditional classroom teaching, Problem Based Learning involves supporting student group work and guiding of group processes. The direct contact with the students is for him the most rewarding part of his work. He does not treat the international students differently from Dutch students. "I enjoy seeing young people develop themselves and when they leave I think: there is the next engineer!"

Conclusion

At IHS students have a close relationship with the teacher. A more independent attitude is expected from the international students at the faculty CTW, but also here the direct relation with the student is important for the work satisfaction of the teacher. Both teachers demonstrated a high commitment with their students and the quality of their education. However, the IHS teacher does not make a difference between categories of students; the University Twente teacher categorically talks about international and Dutch students, whereas the Dutch students are 'the standard'.

4.3 Major challenges and difficulties

Teacher 1.

Workload

She experiences a high teaching load as many topics have to be offered by one teacher. Next to teaching, she does the course coordination and there is a heavy demand on consulting. Consulting is becoming more and more important, to keep

informed about developments in the countries of origin of the students; for case studies, examples. No time for attending conferences or finishing her PhD. Content and context.

Overloaded curriculum

Many topics have to be offered, but very little time is available for each topic. It is frustrating that topics cannot get more time for in depth study and understanding. Lack attention for the return of students to their home countries. What might they expect when returning home? How will colleagues react on the new skills and knowledge? Will there be room for using it? Might lead to frustration. Course is one year, should be 1 ½ year.

Increased competition other Higher Education Institutions

For many years HIS was used to be one of the few international higher education institutions in the Netherlands. Since xxxx IHS has to compete with other Universities of Sciences and Universities of Applied Sciences; high market competition.

New business model

The business model of IHS has drastically changed after a restructuring of the organisation in 2000. Then in 2004, IHS became an independent, limited, company associated in the Erasmus University Holding. Staff reduced from 80 to 30. Permanent staff is expected to work more as managers and attracting visiting staff from outside, if needed.

The changing international student

The type of students attending the courses at IHS is changing. More and more European or "Northern" students apply and there is a high increase of Chinese students. Traditionally most students come with a fellowship paid by the Dutch Development Cooperation or another funding organisation (World Bank, FAO), but the number of self-paying students is increasing. Consequently students have become more critical and demanding. Another group of students are those who choose to study a year in an international group and select IHS for its international environment. She has to reconsider her role, her position in class as a lecturer is changing.

Universities for applied sciences underestimate internationalisation

For some years she is offering an international minor at the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences to prepare Dutch students for international exchange programs. She is very concerned about the lack of understanding of the University about conditions in the countries in the 'south' where they send their students. Students are badly prepared and hardly supervised, resulting in both frustration by the Dutch students and the receiving institution in the 'south'. Pretensions about international exposure for relevance of student's future working situation.

Teacher 2.

English lectures

Recently all University Twente Master courses are open for international students and courses have to be offered in English. Besides some international courses, University staff is not prepared for teaching in English! Many teachers perceive teaching in English as a burden; some staff is even reluctant to change from Dutch to English language in case of few international students (normal case). Some refuse to teach in English at all.

Differences in learning style

The international students in general are not used to Problem Based Learning, while Dutch students had already PBL during their BSc study, so are used to it. This creates frustrating situations for both Dutch and international students. Dutch students can be reluctant to work in groups with international students; they have to change to English and adapt to differences in level and cultural behaviour of the international student. Nevertheless he considers Problem based learning a good learning approach for international students as they work in groups and not in isolation.

Entrance level of students

Mixed experiences with students. Some work very hard despite the different learning environment and succeed. Others are too weak and fail. Not always clear why this is. Teacher applies an entrance test for his course. Some international students do not pass this test. They are sent back to the international office. He has no idea what happened with students who are not admitted. He has mixed experiences with capacity of international students; some are good, some are bad.

Integration in social life

International students have to find their way in the already established social networks of the Dutch students. International students have to adapt to Dutch culture, Dutch University life and way of studying. He considers the preparation and guidance of international students for studying at University Twente not sufficient, which contributes to the failure of some of these students.

Unbalance in Dutch and international students

Some of the problems mentioned above could be less or even solved if classes are more international, at least half international students and half Dutch. Now international students are a minority in the course, so the Dutch students dominate the processes in class.

Role international office

As a lecturer he has no say in the placing of international students in his course(s) and the appropriateness of the course for the student in the context of his study program. International students might be placed in his 'Dutch' course, while he also offers the course in English particularly for students with an interest in an international course. Many issues are decided by the international office, without proper coordination with the lecturing staff. The international office does not listen to the experiences of the lecturing staff. Frustrating. The institutional support for the international students is insufficient.

Universities not ready for international education

The development of the international joint master course together with the University of Dortmund failed due to mismatches in curriculum, semester structure, lack of experience in accommodating international students, country differences in payment of course fees and fellowships, credit exchange between universities not clear. According to him the universities not yet ready for joint international education.

Conclusion

The challenges the two teachers are facing are different in nature. Teacher 1 is confronted with a high working load and increased pressure to do her consulting tasks. This situation is partly due to the recent reorganisation of the institute. She is also confronted with a changing student population: students

are more demanding and not restricted to students from developing countries. According to teacher 2 the English language is a main problem at the University of Twente. Next to that the balance of international versus Dutch students is not good, causing frustrations among students and staff. Partly he holds the student administration and support offices, like the international office, responsible for this: they are not well prepared to implement the ambitious internationalisation policies of the University.

4.4 Teacher professional development

Teacher 1.

The many years of experience in consulting and working in projects in developing countries all over the world, formed the foundation for her work as lecturer in an international academic institute; both in content and context. Through consulting activities she stays informed about developments in the countries of origin of the students. And she uses her experiences for the development of new case studies and up-dating her lectures. .

Through yearly performance appraisals and student evaluations she receives feedback on her functioning. Her work is highly appreciated and she feels well respected by the institute. A colleague: "You are one of the best trainers!" Remarks like this she considers important to stay motivated, as workload is very high.

For many years she is working on her PhD, but due to heavy workload this goes very slow. Additional time and resources are allocated this year for her PhD work. She would like to be able to attend conferences and symposia to discuss and exchange ideas with subject specialists; but for this no time and resources are available.

Some additional courses were attended to further improve her didactical skills. She is not involved in e-learning, but colleagues are developing distance education courses. If she needs, she can make use of the facilities of the Erasmus University for further teacher training.

Teacher 2.

He became involved in teaching already during his study and continued to work at the University as a lecturer after his graduation. As student-assistant he was involved in a pilot course based on Project Based Learning. Through this work he received excellent training by his professor in this particular learning approach and was later asked to set up other courses based on PBL.

In the yearly performance appraisals he scores very well as a teacher and his work is appreciated. Feels rewarded for his efforts as a course developer, teacher and supervisor of students.

Officially he should follow a basic didactical course according to the Education Centre of the University. But he don't see any added value in such a course as he is one of the most experienced teachers applying Project Based Learning. In general he and his colleagues have no confidence in the Education Centre. "There is no role for the Education Centre; I

have nothing with it. We have our own learning concepts and unique courses; they don't know how to handle this".

In e-learning he is not interested, it is not 'his thing'; the direct contact with the students is the most important and rewarding part of his work.

Conclusion

Teacher professional development takes place in practice. For the teacher 1 this is through her earlier work experiences in the different countries and her ongoing consultancy work. Teacher 2 received his didactical training at the university as a student-assistant and is now an expert in PBL.

Systematic professional development provide in case of teacher 1, although she would love to have time to improve her course. More important for her is finishing her PhD and her consulting tasks. Teacher 2 doesn't see a need for additional didactical training in international education; he has no confidence at all in the education specialists at the University. Besides that he has a good didactical background.

None of the teachers indicated the need for additional training in competencies related to international higher education.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Although both teachers are involved in international higher education, their 'classrooms' are very different as is illustrated by the schematic representation in figure 1.

At IHS the students are treated as international students. The course objectives and the curriculum have a close relation to the training needs of students and students professional or country background.

Both teachers demonstrated a high commitment with their students. They both enjoy their teaching and student supervision, and consider education the most important part of their academic work. In their professional development they strive for high quality of their education.

The IHS teacher does not make a difference between categories of students; the students are international and are all 'equal' in and outside the classroom. The University Twente teacher categorically talks about international and Dutch students, whereas the Dutch students are somehow 'the standard'.

The challenges the two teachers are facing are different in nature. Teacher 1 is confronted with a high working load and a changing and more demanding student population. According to teacher 2 the English language is still a major problem at the University Twente. His main frustrations are the student administration and support offices, like the international office: they are not well prepared to implement the ambitious internationalisation policies of the University. As a consequence students (both international and Dutch) suffer from this. Concerned with his students in the international class; both with the Dutch as with the international.

Teacher professional development takes place in practice. For the teacher 1 this is through her earlier work experiences in the different countries and her ongoing consultancy work. Teacher

2 received his didactical training at the university as a student-assistant and is now an expert in PBL. Systematic teacher professional development during their career is not part of the organisational cultures.

None of the teachers indicated the need for additional training in international higher education.

6. DISCUSSION

For the two teachers investigated, the international classroom is completely different and accordingly the problems they are facing are of a different nature. One can argue that this is to expect as IHS has been involved in international higher education for more than 50 years and the faculty CTW of the University Twente only the last 10 years.

The problems the teachers are facing are for a great part related to the processes of internationalization and globalisation. But for both institutions these processes have other consequences. IHS has to compete with other universities for their funding and students. Their organizational structures are changing and other competencies are required from the staff, e.g. management skills, in case of IHS. At the faculty of CTW they are still in the process of getting the organization and teaching staff ready for the stream of international students.

Are there really different international classrooms? Or are the above described cases intermediates of the international classroom of the future? Will there be one, let's call it global classroom? Or is it more realistic to strive for different categories of international classrooms? And what does all this mean for the development of teachers' competences?

Teekens, 2004, presents nine clusters of required qualifications for lecturers in international education. How relevant are these for the teachers in the two described international classrooms? And how can teachers require these competencies in the framework of their professional development? It is worthwhile to discuss these with the teachers involved.

Nine clusters of required qualifications for lecturers

1. *General*
2. *Issues related to using a non-native language of instruction*
3. *Factors related to dealing with cultural differences*
4. *Specific requirements regarding teaching and learning styles*
5. *Insight into the cultural implications of using media and technology*
6. *Specific requirements connected with the academic discipline*
7. *Knowledge of foreign education systems*
8. *Knowledge of the international labour market*
9. *Personal qualities*

In: Teekens, 2004. The international classroom. Nuffic.

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