



Lecturers' perceptions of the Internationalization of the Curriculum in Finnish higher tourism education

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Abstract

The Internationalization of the Curriculum (IoC) has become a more important focus in higher tourism education in recent years. However, despite several studies, its key definitions and dominant conceptual frameworks have not been adopted by the tourism education literature. Therefore, this qualitative study extends the current understanding of IoC in higher tourism education from lecturers' perspective by applying the key definitions and dominant conceptual frameworks from the IoC literature (Leask, 2001; 2009; 2011; 2013a; 2013b; 2015; Leask & Bridge, 2013). The study provides further insights into how IoC is perceived in action in the context of tourism education in a non-English speaking European country: Finland. The findings reveal that IoC in Finnish higher tourism education is still fragmented and based on ad hoc practices. Conversation should be initiated to develop shared understanding and to answer the questions about IoC at the institutional and degree program level. A number of suggestions are made for the program managers and lecturers to support them in evaluating the current state of IoC and help them to ensure the competitiveness of the degree programs.

Keywords: internationalization, curriculum, tourism, higher education, Finland

Introduction: research design

This article addresses the need for a better understanding of the curriculum as an aspect of internationalization in higher tourism education, since curriculum internationalization has become a more important focus in higher education institutions in recent years. Traditionally, internationalization in European higher education has focused on mobility, reacting to the European Commission initiatives, with the main goal of increasing the number of incoming and outgoing students within the European Union (de Wit & Hunter, 2015). However, the European emphasis in internationalization of higher education has been shifting from physical mobility

to the Internationalization of the Curriculum (later referred to as IoC) and learning outcomes (de Wit & Hunter, 2015). Although the pandemic has stopped most kinds of non-essential mobility and brought about enormous hindrance to the internationalization of higher education (Edelheim, 2020; Hudzik, 2020; Peters et al., 2020), globalization and internationalization of higher education will not cease. No doubt, they will be different tomorrow than they were yesterday, which means that new ideas and ways of engaging internationalization in higher tourism education are required.

It is evident that the tourism industry is highly diverse and naturally international, intercultural and global. For this reason, the employers rely on their workforce to be involved and interact with international tourists (Hearns et al., 2007; Sangpikul, 2009). These features in the international operational environment create expectations for higher education institutions, and the demand for internationalism increasingly affects all their activities. Therefore, it is important to identify the meanings given to IoC which go beyond the idea of serving the needs of the tourism industry.

In the internationalization of higher education, the curriculum enhancement stresses the importance of internationalization efforts at the institutional and teaching community levels (Korhonen & Weil, 2015). The lecturers represent a group of employees most deeply affected by internationalization, and they are in charge of integrating international and intercultural perspectives into the curriculum in a planned and systematic way (Ayoum et al., 2010; Leask, 2011). They are the frontline personnel who select content and design and manage teaching, learning and assessment arrangements (Hsu, 2017; Leask & Bridge, 2013). Higher education institutions are also responsible for the professional development of lecturers who put their internationalization strategies into practice within their discipline at the program and course level. Thus, it is important to identify the meanings the lecturers give to IoC in order to improve their competencies and the development of IoC. In other words, understanding the lecturers' perspective of IoC contributes to the quality of education.

In tourism education literature, the focus has been on the internationalization of higher education at a broader level and general issues pertaining to the curriculum, e.g., curriculum planning models and critical reviews of the curriculum (Fidgeon, 2010; Hsu, 2017). In addition, the tourism education literature has explored the activities to increase the level of internationalization at the degree program level as well as the student's isolated experiences abroad. Although several studies have been made on IoC, the key definitions and dominant conceptual frameworks for IoC in higher education (cf. Leask, 2001; 2009; 2011; 2013a; 2013b; 2015; Leask & Bridge, 2013) have not been adopted by the tourism education literature. Consequently, IoC in higher tourism education has remained poorly understood and there is no coherent approach which would also consider the lecturers' and degree program managers' perspectives to an internationalized curriculum.

This study extends the current understanding of IoC in higher tourism education and provides further insights into how IoC is perceived in action by highlighting the tourism lecturers' views. The research question was: How do lecturers perceive IoC in Finnish higher tourism education at the level of their teaching practice? Thus, IoC is approached from the perspective of

including and integrating international and intercultural dimensions into the content, teaching and learning processes of a tourism degree program at the bachelor level in order to enhance the quality of education for all students (cf. Leask, 2015). It is about appraising the international and intercultural aspects when designing and implementing tourism degree programs and their courses in higher education.

The article presents an example of IoC in professional higher tourism education, that is, in the universities of applied sciences (UAS) in Finland, a country, which is a full member of the European Higher Education Area. A great deal of the literature on the internationalization of tourism education comes from English speaking countries: Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, which have diverse, multicultural populations and significant numbers of international students. Since internationalization has always been understood in different ways in different countries (Knight, 2013), this study brings forward a perspective of a non-English speaking country in the European context. This means that it is a necessity to address IoC in this context with its specific features.

The article presents first a short review of the definition and the conceptual framework of IoC. Then it explores internationalization in the context of tourism degree programs. The section on methodology explains the procedure of qualitative data collection and the process of analysis. The results include a description of the data with the categories of IoC in higher tourism education as identified from the perspective of the lecturers. Finally, the discussion and conclusions focus on interpreting the results. In uncovering this new knowledge about IoC in higher tourism education, this article aims at equipping decision makers, administrators and lecturers in tourism degree programs with valuable insights into successful IoC.

Literature review

Definitions of the Internationalization of the Curriculum

The most cited definition of the internationalization of higher education is that by Knight (2004, p. 11): “Internationalization is the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education”. In the broad definition of internationalization, there are two key components in the internationalization policies and programs of higher education, which are constantly evolving and becoming increasingly intertwined (cf. Knight, 2004). One is Internationalization Abroad (IA), understood as all forms of education and movement across borders or cultures: mobility of people, projects, programs and providers. The other is Internationalization at Home (IaH), which is the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into a formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments (Beelen & Jones, 2015). Even if IaH is more curriculum-orientated, IA can also be curriculum-related, so there are limits to such a distinction (de Wit & Hunter, 2015).

The curriculum has been identified as a key element contributing to the internationalization of higher tourism education at the degree program level (Ayoun et al. 2010; Black, 2004; Hale & Tijmstra, 1990; Sangpikul, 2009). Leask (2015) defines the formal curriculum as a syllabus and a

planned schedule of experiences and activities the student must undertake as part of the degree program. According to Leask (2009), the formal curriculum is the sequenced program of teaching and learning activities and experiences organized around defined content areas, topics and resources the objectives of which are assessed in various ways including examinations, various types of assignments and practical activities. In addition, Mäkinen and Annala (2012) argue that many higher education lecturers regard the curriculum as documented degree requirements, syllabus or a series of learning experiences generated by students or a list of the content of lecture series and the accompanying background reading.

The most widely accepted definition of IoC in higher education is that by Leask (2015, p. 9): "IoC is the incorporation of international, intercultural and/or global dimensions into the content of the curriculum, as well as learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods and support services of a study program". As stated above, choices regarding learning, teaching and assessment are at the heart of IoC (Leask, 2011; 2013a). In addition, the focus is on a program of study, which involves all students and requires more than isolated, optional experiences and activities (Leask, 2013a).

Conceptual framework of the Internationalization of the Curriculum

The most comprehensive attempt to conceptualize IoC was made by Leask and Bridge (2013), who presented a conceptual framework for IoC at the discipline level. The framework focuses on IoC as a vehicle for preparing graduates for life in a globalized world (Leask, 2015). The framework makes a link between IoC and disciplinary and institutional conditions (Leask, 2013a). Thus, the conceptual framework (see Figure 1) situates the disciplines and the team of lecturers, who construct the curriculum, at the center of the internationalization process (Leask & Bridge, 2013, p. 84). The bottom half of the framework is concerned with the layers of context (institutional, local, regional, national, and global), which create a set of conditions, which often intertwine and influence the design of an internationalized curriculum. The top half of the framework is concerned with curriculum design, and its three key elements include the requirements of professional practice and citizenship, assessment of student learning and systematic development across the program with all students developing intercultural and international knowledge, skills and attitudes. (Leask & Bridge, 2013, pp. 84–85.)

Furthermore, there are three main areas of focus in IoC: 1) structural options and pathways for the course design, 2) developing international perspectives in students, and 3) teaching and learning strategies for internationalization (Leask, 2001). The most cited typology and a tool for defining different ways in which the course structure and design might be internationalized is the typology for Internationalising the Curriculum developed as part of an Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development project (see van der Wende, 1996). Leask (2001) also developed further the defining characteristics of this typology to assist the lecturers in seeing how the typology might help them to internationalize their courses. Developing international perspectives in students refers to the consideration of the effects that the studies in a course will have on students. In other words, the outcomes for students should play a central role in the curriculum planning process. In addition, a successfully internationalized curriculum emphasizes a wide range of teaching and learning strategies designed to prepare the graduates to

perform professionally and effectively in an international and intercultural environment (see Leask, 2001).

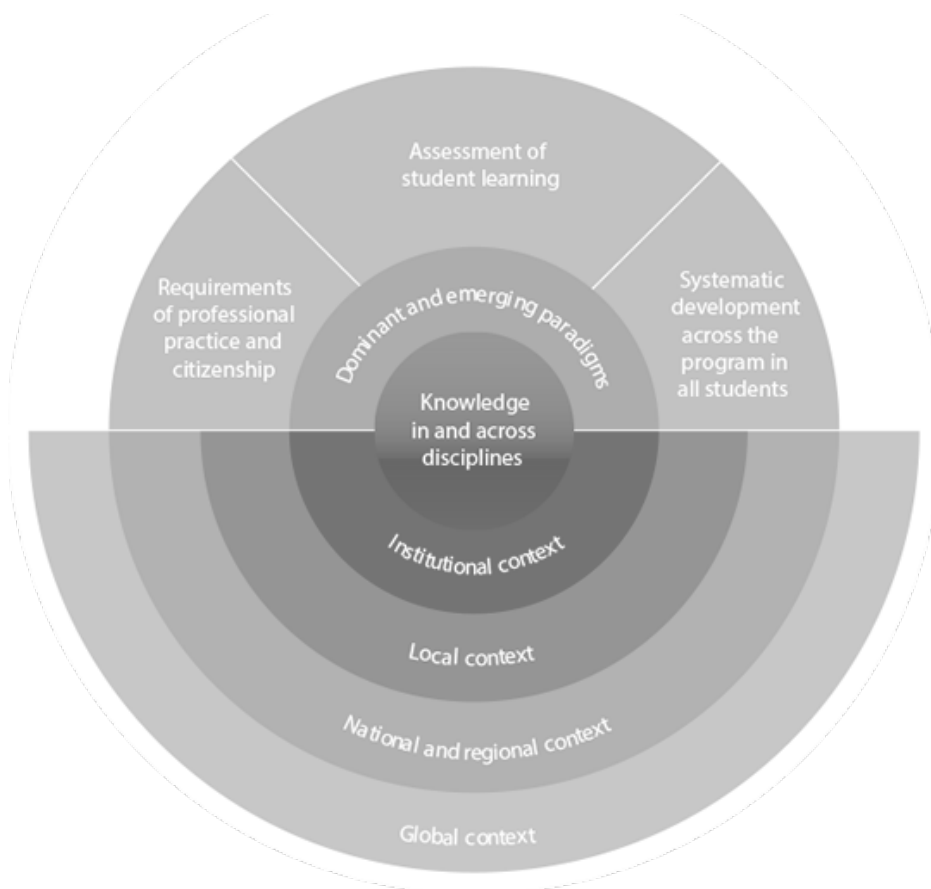


Figure 1. A conceptual framework of Internationalization of the Curriculum (Leask & Bridge, 2013, p. 84).

Indeed, IoC is a complex, planned, developmental, cyclical, and systematic process that is as much about whom and how we teach as it is about what we teach (de Wit & Hunter, 2015; Leask, 2001; Leask, 2013a). However, it is not always certain what IoC means in practice in higher education institutions. IoC in higher education is not a new concept, but it is hard to conceptualize, diversely interpreted and its operationalization within the institutions remains a challenge (de Wit & Hunter, 2015; Leask & Bridge, 2013). There may be no clear vision or understanding of what the desired outcome should look like and how this can be practically achieved. Thus, IoC is more often a rhetoric and accidental issue than reality and a clearly intended outcome (Reid & Spencer-Oatey, 2013; Svensson & Wihlborg, 2010).

Internationalization of the Curriculum in the tourism context

The internationalization of tourism degree programs has been explored by Ayoun et al. (2010), Black (2004), Brookes and Becket (2009) and Sangpikul (2009). These authors aimed at identifying the dimensions, which contribute to the internationalization of tourism and/or hospitality degree programs by using the international dimensions framework in order for the graduates to develop as global citizens and to work effectively in the international tourism and/or hospitality industry. They focused on how the tourism departments need to internationalize degree programs and progress towards internationalization. Furthermore, Brookes and Becket (2011) provided a framework comprising IaH and IA dimensions for academics to assess the internationalization of hospitality management degree programs and the extent to which cross-cultural competencies are developed among graduates.

Black (2004) and Sangpikul (2009) used Hale and Tijnstra's (1990) model for the internationalization of management education as a starting point. The model assumes that the internationalization of higher education can be accomplished by adapting the curriculum, preparing students, developing staff, going out into the world to make alliances and determining different internationalization activities related to these areas. According to Black (2004), the four dimensions – faculty, students, curriculum content and international alliances – cannot be treated in isolation, since they all relate to and depend on each other. Furthermore, Brookes and Beckett (2009) claimed that there is room for further development of the internationalization dimensions and adopted the framework of Raftery (2007) in their study. Their study identifies seven key dimensions of internationalization: the internationalization of the curriculum, internationalization of student experience, international recruitment, international partnerships and strategic alliances, international exchanges, international research and alumni relations. Ayoun et al. (2010), on the other hand, identified the following dimensions: students, faculty, curriculum, research, organizational support and international networking, suggesting that these dimensions emphasize not only the relatively traditional arrangements but also the newer initiatives in internationalization.

Moreover, Zehrer and Lichtmannegger (2008) presented the philosophy of internationalization at Management Center Innsbruck (MCI), Austria, as well as its internationalization strategy and implementation of internationalization in the tourism program. Barron (2014) examined the international curricula from the perspectives of local students, international students and academic staff at a UK university as a means of developing an understanding of an internationalized curriculum. Leung, Wen, and Jiang (2018) compared the differences in curriculum development of undergraduate hospitality programs in the U.S., the UK and Australia with suggestions of creating international hospitality program standards to make hospitality programs comparable across countries. Khuong and Tran (2018) analyzed how internationalization has been implemented in the tourism training programs in Vietnam mainly focusing on IaH.

Study abroad has been studied extensively in the tourism literature as a way of internationalizing the tourism curriculum and the student's experience. Studies abroad consist of various types of programs, compositions and formats ranging from one-year-long university exchanges to short-term, experientially based educational travel programs (Stoner et al., 2014). A common

trend in hospitality and tourism education research is to focus on deep, experiential and transformative learning by studying abroad through short-term education programs (Cavender et al., 2020; Ritz, 2011; Stoner et al., 2014), international tourism field schools and field trips (Gretzel et al., 2009; Hayes et al., 2020; Scherle & Reiser, 2017; Weeden et al., 2011) as well as internships in an international setting (Busby & Gibson, 2010). Exporting education overseas (Lagiewski et al., 2019; Skokic et al., 2016) is also an emerging research theme. In addition, international collaborative learning projects using virtual learning environments have been emphasized to allow all students to interact in the international and global arenas (Deale, 2015; Lai & Wang, 2013).

To sum up, internationalization in higher tourism education is generally regarded as a process that involves increasing the range of international activities within and between higher education institutions, and the studies have drawn on the broad umbrella term of the internationalization of higher education by Knight (2004). Even if the dynamic nature of the tourism industry does require constant attention to the curriculum, and IoC is an increasingly common trend in higher education (Busby & Huang, 2012; Fidgeon, 2010), the tourism education literature has mainly explored the activities to increase the level of internationalization at the degree program level as well as the student's isolated experiences abroad. So far, research has not examined IoC in the tourism context by using the key definitions and dominant frameworks by Leask (2001; 2011; 2013a; 2013b; 2015) and Leask and Bridge (2013). Since the studies have failed in identifying the finer details of teaching and learning in IoC in the tourism context, a sharper focus is needed.

Methodology

An interpretivist paradigm was applied in this study, as the aim was to gain deep and rich understanding of the tourism lecturers' perceptions of IoC. The core premise of the interpretive paradigm is that reality is socially constructed (Thanh & Thanh, 2015), and the main aim of the paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). When applied to educational research, this paradigm enables researchers to construct rich understanding of the experiences of the lecturers and of the cultures in the classrooms and institutions they work at (Taylor & Medina, 2011).

IoC was explored in the context of Finnish higher tourism education. The Finnish international strategy for higher education and research states that students graduating from these institutions should have an ability and willingness to be involved in international and multicultural environments and understand diversity and global challenges (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018). Thus, Finland's higher education system offers more than 400 English-taught bachelor's and master's degree programs in 13 universities and 22 universities of applied sciences (UAS) (The Finnish National Agency for Education, 2020). In total, there are 11 UAS providing tourism education in Finland, of which six offer full-time bachelor programs with 100% of tuition in English. In addition, there are many full-time bachelor programs with tuition mainly in Finnish but with modules in English.

The type of sampling was purposive (Patton, 2015) to produce a sample of experienced tourism lecturers. First, Finnish UAS representing geographically diverse areas of the country were selected for the study. Then, the potential lecturers were identified and sent an e-mail detailing the basic purpose of the research to evaluate their willingness to participate in the study. In total, 10 lecturers with an average of 16.5 years' experience as lecturers from four Finnish UAS participated in the interviews. Three of the selected lecturers also acted as curriculum coordinators. The data collection was carried out in May 2020 through face-to-face interviews by a web conferencing system due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The author conducted the interviews, and they were recorded for later transcription. Each interview lasted for about 50–75 minutes.

A semi-structured interview protocol (Brinkmann, 2014) was employed to provide a structure to the interviews and flexibility for the participants. The interviews included a consistent set of open-ended and unstructured questions, which were designed to elicit discussion about IoC. A topic guide was prepared based on the existing literature of IoC and used in a flexible way during the interviews. After the first interviews had been conducted, the topic guide was established as effective, because the interview questions were broad and encouraged respondents to describe their perceptions of IoC. For example, the following questions were asked from the participants: (a) How would you describe the internationalization of tourism bachelor degree programs in your institution? (b) How are international and intercultural dimensions integrated in the learning and teaching processes? (c) What are the main challenges of IoC in your program of study? The informants were given full freedom to express their thoughts and ascribe meanings. The sample size was completed, when information reached a saturation point (Creswell, 2013), and the interviews did not produce any additional substantial information.

The analysis followed the logic of abductive reasoning, distinct from induction and deduction, combining systematically ideas arising from the empirical data to the concepts from the theoretical literature with an emphasis on theory development (Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). Abductive analysis is a qualitative data analysis approach, which aims at generating creative and novel theoretical insights (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). It is closer to an inductive than a deductive approach, and the continuous interplay between theory and empirical observation is stressed more heavily than in the grounded theory approach (Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

This study rests on the analytical framework and theoretical insights from the IoC literature (Leask, 2001; 2011; 2013a; 2013b; 2015; Leask & Bridge, 2013), which were used together with the empirical findings in an abductive manner. In the abductive process, IoC studies and models were utilized and further combined with empirical insights. Yet, the empirical data played the leading role in the search for new descriptions and conceptual categorizations. Thus, the understanding of IoC in higher tourism education was developed in stages and refined in an iterative process between IoC literature and empirical data analysis.

The analysis begun with open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) as the primary approach to the data. The data were divided into smaller units, and codes were developed inductively to describe them. Then, these first order codes were compared with respect to similarities and differences and structured into emerging categories, which were connected to existing theoretical

concepts. In other words, the codes were grouped using an abductive approach based on the IoC literature. The process continued by consideration of which parts of the prior theory match with the empirical observations, and which do not. Thus, in the second phase of the coding, i.e., in the selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), a more structured analysis was conducted to integrate the different categories developed and to choose the core categories, yet, in parallel with reading the literature and analyzing the data.

Dubois and Gadde (2002, p. 554) described this matching process as going back and forth between the framework, data sources and analysis in order to find a match between the theory and empirical reality. Therefore, the core categories chosen (Layers of context, Curriculum design and delivery) were the best match between the theory and empirical reality. These categories were also named by using the analytical framework and theoretical insights from the IoC literature. To give an example, the surrounding areas as international tourism destinations and their volume of international tourists arose from the empirical data and this category was named as "Local industry context" from the conceptual framework of Leask and Bridge (2013).

Results

Layers of context

The results show that from the lecturers' perspective IoC in higher tourism education includes a set of institutional and local tourism industry conditions, enablers and blockers. These were named as two main layers of context, 1) the institutional context and 2) the local industry context, by using the analytical framework and theoretical insights from the IoC literature. These two layers have significant influence on the decisions the lecturers make in relation to IoC.

Institutional context

The results show that the institutional context creates a set of conditions for IoC in Finnish higher tourism education. The most dominant aspect was lack of strategic management, guidance and support as well as the management's poor understanding of IoC in practice. Consequently, IoC has rarely been integrated as part of the strategical procedures of the higher education institutions. Since there is no systematic development of IoC across the institutions or degree programs, the lecturers perceived that IoC remains the responsibility and consideration of individual lecturers. Because IoC is not systematic, its integration in teaching activities depends on the lecturers' competences and attitudes:

IoC depends on the lecturers a lot. If the lecturer does not include these elements in the course, the course does not include them. And this depends on the perspectives and attitudes the lecturer has of IoC. (I10)

Furthermore, several lecturers considered the insufficient amount of time given for internationalization as a blocker of systematic development across the program. They claimed that IoC takes time, and it requires joint development and teamwork. According to them, the administrative section does not understand the challenges of international and multicultural teaching. The lack of time was expressed for example in the following way:

Development requires a lot of effort. I am not sure that the management is aware of how much time we have to spend working together. We should be able to share and discuss more [...] it involves resources and how willing you are to exhaust yourself. (13)

The lecturers also referred to the lack of support services related to the practical issues of IoC at the institutional context. For example, degree programs seldom have a coordinator whose tasks include international issues. The international services in higher education institutions often concentrate on servicing exchange students, but the lecturers described the other functions related to internationality in the organization as 'a joke'. They called for systematic actions, in particular, in creating and maintaining network contacts, in coordination of international placements and for hosting guest lecturers:

We have hardly any teacher exchange any more. Their coming is not systematic because it is up to us [...] we don't have anybody who is actively in contact with their institutions. It shows that international teacher exchange is not an essential part in the financing model of the Ministry for the UAS any more. Its importance is not understood which is rather sad. (17)

Local industry context

According to the lecturers, IoC was crucially affected by the local tourism industry context due to the professional nature of the degree programs. The tourism industry is a global business and internationality is strongly present in all its activities. In the curricula of the degree programs, global and local contexts are strongly interconnected. Therefore, there is a strong connection between IoC and the attractiveness of the area as an international tourism destination and its volume of international tourists, since they affect the level of the internationalization of the local tourism enterprises and the multiculturalism of the work place. The more there is international tourism in the area, the easier it was to carry out IoC:

We are a very popular international tourism destination. They say that our area is a good laboratory for international tourism. It is very easy for the international students to get placements and to integrate and enter the field of tourism, because the working language is English. They have been asked to come to work to enterprises, which are really international, even when they are still studying. (15)

When the number of international tourists is small in the area, the tourism industry is based on microenterprises, which often struggle to maintain sufficient income. As a result, the enterprises do not conduct international business and can have poor competences for internationalization as well as limited language skills. In practice, this means that the enterprises are not interested in industry-academia collaboration. Thus, lack of international tourism in the area provides challenges for IoC, since tourism is an international business. In addition, there are students from different countries and cultures studying in the degree programs:

We live here in the periphery [...] If we have a few individual tourists in the town and we can see them in the street [...] the international customer is a kind of sight in this region. So, we have not been able to see or experience proper international groups with students. I have been thinking whether we can get students placements in these rural enterprises. We don't have those big companies in tourism here or international brands like Hilton. (18)

Curriculum design and delivery

The results indicate that the lecturers perceive broadening the curriculum and course content by different means as a significant element of IoC. In addition, they deemed important to utilize a wide range of teaching and learning strategies to ensure effective learning. These were named as 1) different pathways for curriculum and course design and 2) teaching and learning strategies as the main areas of focus for IoC by using the analytical framework and theoretical insights from the IoC literature. Pathways for curriculum and course design involve different methods related to course content design. Teaching and learning strategies refer to multicultural teamwork and the importance of two-way communication in the classroom to develop international perspectives in students as well as to transparent assessment criteria and clear statements of the learning outcomes.

Pathways for curriculum and course design

The lecturers considered IoC as broadening the course content with detailed and extensive case studies with international perspectives, examples and investigation of practices in other countries and cultures. International case studies show in a concrete way in which the same issue can be understood in a different way. The contribution of international students is very much valued, and they are expected to provide examples from their own countries:

When a Chinese student used a map of the world in his presentation, he said that this country is on the left and the rest of the class started to roll their heads. They didn't understand that we look at the world map in such a way that Finland is up in the middle, whereas the Chinese look at the map in a somewhat different way. What we have on the left they have on the right because the earth is round [...] It is a richness that we can learn different perspectives. (I10)

International and intercultural dimensions are also incorporated into the content of the curriculum by offering compulsory or elective parts with universities abroad. These operations are based on a comprehensive partnership network and the financial mechanisms of the EU, e.g., Erasmus+ program. The exchange students (duration more than 3 months) are important for higher education institutions. Study exchange is a compulsory part of the curriculum in some UAS and optional in others. Students can take such studies in a partnership institution during their exchange, which the home institution does not offer. Furthermore, short-term education programs abroad, joint online courses and international tourism field schools organized in collaboration with partner institutions were considered important. Joint courses were also designed in EU funded projects. In addition, the export of education has become increasingly important for IoC. One lecturer describes this collaboration as follows:

We have a common implementation of a course with three different European higher education institutions. It was started in a project but at the moment, we cooperate with them in a very concrete way by producing a five-credit course together. They come to us this year and next year we all go there or organize it online. The lecturers have made the material, exam and everything together. (I5)

Teaching and learning strategies

The lecturers described IoC as utilizing effective teaching and learning strategies. The effectiveness of learning was related to the amount of two-way communication in class. The lecturers emphasized that teaching in an international and multicultural group should involve a lot of discussion to develop international and intercultural perspectives in students. Through discussion, the students learn about other cultures, multiple cultural meanings and become aware of cultural differences and similarities. Engaging students in multicultural group work was considered as a means of providing them with better cultural understanding. A lecturer described teaching through discussion as follows:

We should emphasize discussion and sharing thoughts in an international and multicultural group. This is how we can make the students see how people approach things from very different perspectives, when they come from a different culture. It is important to share this especially through discussion, because it is the only way of learning why a person sees an issue in a completely different way than somebody else. (I3)

However, the lecturers admitted that they do not adapt their teaching styles or attempt to take every student's learning style into consideration, even if it is the core assumption of successful IoC. The lecturers emphasized that Finnish pedagogy was a competitive advantage and did not consider it necessary to change their teaching strategies. The teaching and learning in the Finnish UAS are based on problem-solving projects and assignments with tourism organizations, where students work collaboratively in teams. These projects and assignments provide students hands-on work experience and a possibility to apply their theoretical knowledge in real situations. The lecturers expect the students to think and act themselves, show initiative and originality. The aim is to promote critical and creative thinking:

I always start by saying that many of you have chosen Finland because we have an excellent school system. You want to experience this. Why would they come here and experience the same teaching and learning methods they have at home [...] That's why we are good at PISA rankings because we dare to put the students to think. (I8)

It was also considered important that the courses are delivered in industry-academia collaboration with work-related study projects and assignments, and studying is practical and work-oriented. The lecturers regarded, in particular, international tourism enterprises operating in Finland and Finnish tourism enterprises with a high proportion of international customers as important collaborators. However, they also pointed out that language is a challenge, particularly in those areas, where there is not a lot of international tourism:

Industry-academia collaboration is a language question, which really scares me. We are currently thinking about it and how to implement it. What do the entrepreneurs think about it, if the material and communication is in English? (I4)

The lecturers also highlighted that it is extremely important to provide students with transparent assessment criteria and clear statements of the learning outcomes. The lecturers explained that international students are often more ambitious and competitive than Finnish students. Therefore, it is important for them to know the assessment criteria in order 'to cover themselves'. However, the focus was not on international and intercultural learning outcomes, since

they were not determined. The assessment criteria are explained at the beginning of the studies and each course, and it is important that the students know what they mean in practice:

They might have certain expectations what their assessment at numerical level should be [...] therefore we need to be a bit careful. In many cultures, you always need to get the maximum grade. Therefore, it is important to open up the assessment criteria and tell the students what kind of expectations are placed on them. (I2)

Discussion and conclusions

This study aimed at extending the current understanding of IoC in higher tourism education by highlighting the tourism lecturers' perceptions through the analytical framework and conceptual insights from the IoC literature. This article draws on the most cited and dominating definitions and conceptual framework to IoC (Leask, 2001; 2009; 2011; 2013a; 2013b; 2015; Leask & Bridge, 2013) not previously used in the tourism education research. The article contributes to the knowledge basis by adding a perspective of how lecturers perceive IoC in the context of tourism higher education in a non-English speaking European country, in this case in Finland. The article provides valuable implications for higher education institutions on how to internationalize the curriculum in practice.

As Leask (2013, 2015) stressed, the systematic development of IoC is influenced by institutional priorities. Yet, the main shortcoming in IoC in Finnish higher tourism education is the lack of understanding and strategic management of IoC at the institutional level. The findings show that IoC in Finnish higher tourism education lacks systematic development, and it is more or less accidental. This has a major impact on IoC at the degree program level. A coherent approach to an internationalized curriculum at the degree program level is missing, and individual lecturers are left with the responsibility for IoC. The focus is on isolated experiences and activities, which are largely disconnected from the program of study, rather than on the systematic development of the whole program. In conclusion, the findings are in accordance with the results of Khuong and Tran (2018) who concluded that IoC in higher tourism education is still fragmented and based on ad hoc practices.

Although prior studies (Leask & Bridge, 2013) have acknowledged that the requirements of professional practice and the local context create a set of conditions for IoC, these facts have been addressed poorly. When comparing the results to previous studies related to the internationalization of tourism degree programs (Ayoun et al., 2010; Black, 2004; Sangpikul, 2009), the layers of context usually refer to other higher education institutions internationally. The findings of this study demonstrate that the local tourism industry context is a key enabler of IoC in higher tourism education. The findings pointed out that the local tourism industry context, i.e., the volume of international tourist arrivals and the level of internationalization of the tourism industry in the area are a crucial element of IoC due to the professional and international nature of the degree programs. In other words, it is essential to highlight the role of the local tourism industry when developing IoC in the tourism context.

The findings suggest that the pathways to the curriculum and course design as an element of IoC in higher tourism education include features from the typology for Internationalising the Curriculum of van der Wende (1996) and Leask (2001). In particular, the findings emphasize broadening the content of the curricula by internationally comparative approaches and case studies. The findings also highlight the necessity to include parts which are offered by local lecturers at or by universities abroad into the curricula. However, when comparing the findings with these typologies, there are few curricula leading to joint or double degrees in Finnish higher tourism education. This aspect could be stressed more when internationalizing the curriculum.

Teaching and learning strategies as the elements of IoC in higher tourism education also include features from good teaching practices related to IoC as described by Leask (2001) and Leask and Bridge (2013). These strategies used by the lecturers not only broaden the scope of the subject by including international content and contact but also assist in the development of cross-cultural communication skills and understanding intercultural issues. Thus, the lecturers emphasized the students' engagement in teaching and collaborative learning as well as integrating industry-academia collaboration with work-related study projects and assignments into curriculum.

When the findings were compared with the framework by Leask and Bridge (2013), the lecturers identified the need to provide clear outlines for the assessment requirements. On the other hand, they did not integrate international and intercultural aspects to the measured competencies, nor did they assess students' progress towards international and intercultural learning outcomes. As a result, there was no purposeful and structured integration of IoC in terms of the learning outcomes and assessment, even if the ultimate purpose of internationalizing the curriculum is to improve the learning outcomes of the students.

Certainly, internationalization of higher tourism education is facing unprecedented challenges when the world is confronted with the COVID-19 pandemic. Up until very recently, worldwide higher education has lived a dream of prosperous global exchange (Peters et al., 2020). Even if the data was collected after the pandemic had started, the lecturers did not consider the effects of the pandemic in their interviews and physical mobility was deemed important. However, how the pandemic will affect future higher education enrolment and student mobility remains a question. A successful reboot of HE internationalization in a post-COVID-19 world requires a reimagining of the ways in which IoC could be achieved as well as revisions of goals and strategies and integration of HE internationalization into core institutional missions (Hudzik, 2020). This is an opportunity to address the shortcomings in IoC in Finnish higher tourism education: to start conversation building shared understanding and developing answers to questions about IoC at the institutional and degree program level.

Lessons learned and implications for higher education institutions

These findings suggest that there may be a need for the tourism lecturers in Finland to reflect on IoC and develop it at the degree program and personal level. More specifically, a number of recommendations can be made for program managers and lecturers as a result of this study. These recommendations support them in evaluating the current state of IoC and help them to ensure that the degree programs are competitive. Specifically, they are encouraged to:

- Discuss the institutional blockers hindering the systematic development of IoC with the management.
- Discuss the possibility to receive more support and training to successfully embed the elements of IoC in the degree programs with the management.
- Review and agree with the team of lecturers the core decisions concerning learning, teaching and assessment in the entire program to develop it systematically and to connect their courses and activities to the program. The five-stage model of IoC (Leask, 2013a) could be used as a guideline to support this process.
- Broaden the course content with detailed and extensive case studies with international perspectives, examples and investigation of practices in other countries and cultures.
- Deliver courses in industry-academia collaboration with international tourism enterprises and tourism enterprises with international customers.
- Design and deliver compulsory or elective courses with universities abroad: long-term student exchange, short-term education programs abroad, joint online courses and international field schools, joint EU funded projects, education export.
- Develop joint and double degree programs with international partner institutions.
- Engage students in two-way communication: discussions and group work to develop international perspectives in students, learn about other cultures, understand multiple cultural meanings and become aware of cultural differences and similarities.
- Use transparent assessment criteria and clear statements of the learning outcomes.
- Integrate international and intercultural aspects to the measured competencies, and assess the students' progress towards international and intercultural learning outcomes.

Limitations

This study contributes to IoC, but as it is limited to one country, there are limits to its generalizability. Similar research undertaken in different contexts would provide further insights into what IoC means in practice in tourism higher education. It is also important to point out that although the research was conducted in a non-English speaking country, the focus was on IoC and not on English as a medium of instruction, English proficiency or language problems. Nevertheless, the results also shed light on the challenges faced in providing international and intercultural tourism education in a non-English speaking country.

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