

Name: Philip Warwick
University: Durham University
Email: philip.warwick@durham.ac.uk
Unit or project responsible for creating the innovation: Durham University Business School
Theme: Internationalization and intercultural aspects of the curriculum
Title: Making the most of cross-cultural group work
Summary of the good practice: As well as educator managed group allocations, the careful selection of seminar case studies can contribute to better more meaningful cross-cultural exchanges in Business School seminars, so that all members of the group have an opportunity to foreground their knowledge and no one category of student is advantaged because they always understand the context of the cases.
Context of the good practice: Around 200 students study the BA Business and Management and BA Marketing and Management at Durham University Business School. The group is diverse with around 50 per cent of students from the UK and 50 per cent from outside the UK. EU, Chinese, Indian students are well represented in the group. The Changing World of Business module is a core module in the first year looking at issues related to the global business environment. Group work is an integral part of all business programs, in the first-year students choose groups in some modules, are allocated to groups on a week by week basis in others and this module are placed in managed 'syndicate groups' in which they remain for the full academic year. Students are allocated to groups by the module leader and wherever possible, are mixed gender and mixed by country of domicile
Rationale: Once allocated to groups it would be easy for assertive home students to dominate the proceedings if the discussion centered on the UK business environment. To overcome this potential problem, cases are chosen to foreground the knowledge of students from different continents and different backgrounds, while other cases look at global businesses to consider their fortunes in a range of business environments.
Alignment with program and module learning outcomes: Cross-cultural group work is an essential component of the BA Business and Management and BA Marketing and Management which have the following program aims: In keeping with this philosophy the overall aim of the program is therefore to develop our students as people, citizens and positive contributors to business and other organizations, in roles such as those of senior managers, through their continuing ability and commitment to investigate and to learn and to engage with others in applying learning... The following are listed in the program outcome, under key skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ability to perform effectively within a team environment, including leadership & team building, influencing and motivating, monitoring performance, mentoring & coaching, and project management skills. • developed interpersonal skills of effective listening, negotiating, persuasion and presentation. The Changing World of Business module has the following specific aim of encouraging students to develop analytical and collaborative mind sets and a global perspective as well as skills in the following areas (among others) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written and oral communication • Cross-cultural communication skills • Skills of enquiry and explanation • Collaborative team working skills
Resources (time and persons): The choice of cases has been developed over the course of the last three years on a trial and error basis to achieve the best balance of challenge, collaboration and international coverage. Allocating student to the groups takes no more than 2 hours at the start of term.
What were the main enabling factors (conditions) in creating and implementing the innovation? There needs to be a mix of students, clearly the approach to cross-cultural group work would have to be different if the group was much less diverse. Groups that contain one student of a different cultural

identity are likely to lead to 'othering', which could do more harm than good. So care must be taken over the allocations.

What were the main challenges in creating or implementing the innovation?

The main challenges generally come from the students themselves, some may try to switch group to work with friends, a small number (generally less than 10 out of the 200) will attend but will be seemingly incapable of meaningful collaborative work.

I resist all requests to change group and try to have a quiet word with those who do not engage.

Generally, this will be along the lines of this is a necessary skill for your future career, give it a try in a safe environment, no one is judging you etc.

What have been the main methods of dissemination so far?

The lessons learnt have been disseminated within the University, which although fairly international in terms of numbers of students, struggles to develop meaningful interaction between home and international students. I have presented seminars at the Learning and Teaching Conference and in the context of discussions about internationalization.

With which groups or organizations has the innovation been shared so far?

So far dissemination has only been within the institution.

Mainstreaming: What are the possibilities for extending and/or mainstreaming this innovation?

With the addition more meaningful evaluations of the cross-cultural work this could develop into a conference paper and pedagogic practice article.

Sustainability: Please comment on the sustainability of the innovation, including elements which need to be put in place to make this sustainable.

This approach to cross-cultural group work is entirely sustainable given continuing input from module leaders.

Evaluation: How have the success and impact of the innovation been evaluated? Is there an established way of continuous evaluation?

Up to now evaluation has been through module evaluations (which are very positive) and one student led research project which relied on a small number of interviews. Because this was a very small sample it has not been possible to develop this research beyond the student project.

All first-year undergraduates are encouraged to reflect on their group work experiences in the core organizational behavior module which runs in parallel to the Changing World of Business module.

Contributor's reflections: Briefly reflect on your innovation from your own perspective including its strengths and limitations/challenges of implementation/potential implication for wider practice.

I derive great satisfaction from working with a multi-national cohort of students. I enjoy hearing about their diverse experiences and welcome their input in seminars even when it may take us away from the expected path. I appreciate that I am very lucky to be able to work in such a diverse and inclusive environment. If I can find ways to encourage this environment to develop and to help students to develop some of the knowledge and skills listed in the section about alignment with program objectives (above) then I am feel that this is a job very well worth doing.

Does your unit or other units of your university have any plan to further develop this innovation? If yes, please briefly describe the plan.

If available, please provide a link to complete the description of the initiative.