Pedagogies for promoting transcultural/intercultural competence: An investigation into postgraduate taught programmes at one UK university

This paper reports on the preliminary findings of an ongoing project that is investigating the extent to which intercultural/transcultural competence is enhanced or inhibited through current teaching and learning practices across postgraduate taught programmes in four distinct teaching disciplines at one university in the UK. The project also seeks to examine how student and tutor perceptions of intercultural/transcultural competence compare, and identify any tensions and issues between staff and student understandings with a view to improving teaching and learning processes and outcomes.

While the project is guided by an overarching view of transcultural/intercultural competence as a dynamic and contextually fluid process that involves respect for the values of different cultural groups, a conceptual model of transcultural/intercultural competence within the context of the university in question is expected to emerge over the course of the analysis of the data.

The project is exploratory-interpretive in nature and follows a multiple-case design. Eight ‘cases’ are included - two programmes within each of the four teaching faculties – with data obtained from staff and students within each programme. Specifically, data collection involves focus groups with students from each programme and a background interview and a stimulated recall interview with the lecturers using audio-visual recordings from one observed class as a stimulus. Data analysis is inductive, using procedures of codification, thematic analysis and categorisation and include both within-case and cross-case analysis. The preliminary findings show that perceptions of transcultural/intercultural competence are linked to institutional processes and events, the ‘academic culture’ and the intercultural experiences of students and staff.