
From Principles to Practice: A Case Study of Internationalization of a Law Course via Digital Tools

Abstract

A research project, "Supporting the development and implementation of internationalized curricula", was started by Centre for Learning Enhancement And Research (CLEAR) in The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) to internationalize the curriculum. In this project, teaching staff of the eight faculties were invited to collaborate with CLEAR to internationalize their course with an aim to provide an international and intercultural learning environment for local CUHK students. This paper reports on one of the collaborative effort of a Law professor in internationalizing her undergraduate elective LLB course, The Internet and the Law (LAWS 3340), and documents the application of an innovative teaching method and digitalization in designing the course activities. The key word of the project, "internationalization", does not only encompass curricula but also include university education as a whole. This can include not only curricula but the methodology and the organisation of teaching (HRK, 2017). With a broad-based understanding of internationalisation including academic teaching content accompanied by innovative teaching methods, this law course can set as an example for internationalization of the existing courses as well as new courses across disciplines in the future.

LAWS3340 is delivered with a combination of traditional and innovative teaching methods. These methods and outputs have been supported financially via a CUHK Courseware Development Grant. The use of digital platforms for student interaction and class discussion to facilitate new knowledge creation materializes the pedagogical philosophy of collaborative learning. Students of this course are expected to co-create textbook content for an online open-access textbook on cyberlaw entitled 'Governing the Internet' and hosted on wikijuris.net a site created by Associate Professor Nicolas Suzor from Queensland University of Technology Faculty of Law in Australia. 'WikiJuris: Governing the Internet' is a collaborative, open course and textbook about internet law and regulation. There is class time in each seminar assigned for in-class discussion with the aid of a class Google document which is established by the teacher at the beginning of the course. The Google document is set with a privacy level which allows all students with the access link to edit the document at any time. This in-class exercise not only allows students to document their discussion process and outcome but also enables them to learn via peer teaching, co-editing, constant negotiation, and co-creation of new knowledge. The specifics of the use of Google document as discussion tool will be further discussed in this paper. This course is believed to be highly internationalized because elements of internationalization are embedded in different aspects of the course design: teaching philosophy, course content, learning outcomes, student activities, and assessment methods.

The course is underpinned by a teaching philosophy emphasising collaborative learning and the co-creation of knowledge between the teaching team and the students. This design is regarded an endeavor to realize an internationalized curriculum. An internationalized curriculum can be achieved through different means and be composed of an array of elements of internationalization. One of which considers the operational aspects (Van der Wende, 1996) including teaching methods, learning activities, grouping of students, use of media,

evaluation, time and place. The learning activity in this course encourages co-creation of knowledge and is governed by a teaching philosophy that allows students to develop generic skills including capability to understand and respect diverse opinions and cultural differences. 'The experience of co-creating teaching approaches...appears to inspire greater openness to, and appreciation of, differences and to foster deeper connection and empathy across student and staff positions, perspectives and cultural identities' (Cook-Sather, 2015).

One of the bottom-up approaches whereby appropriate learning and teaching strategies are developed within courses and modules (Simm & Marvell, 2017) in recognition of 'internationalization at home' (IaH) is through a student-centered approach. Collins & O'Brien (2003) asserted that a student-centered instruction (SCI) approach places students in the center of the learning process. To create a student-centered learning environment, different SCI approaches have been developed and they are summarized by Froyd & Simpson (2008): Active Learning (Bonwell & Eison, 1991); Collaborative Learning (Bruffee, 1984); Inquiry-based Learning; Cooperative Learning (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991); Problem-based Learning; Peer Led Team Learning (Tien, Roth, & Kampmeier, 2001); Team-based Learning (Michaelson, Knight, & Fink, 2004); Peer Instruction (Mazur, 1997); Inquiry Guided Learning; Just-in-Time Teaching; Small Group Learning; Project-based Learning; Question-directed Instruction. In the design and implementation of LAWS 3340, 'Students as Producers' (Neary, Saunders, Hagyard and Derricott 2015), a novel approach, is adopted.

The CYRILLA project or 'collaborative' is a 'global initiative that seeks to map and analyze the evolution and impacts of legal frameworks in digital environments by aggregating, organizing, and visualizing distributed legal data through open research methodologies, data models, taxonomies, and databases' (CYRILLA, n.d.). The professor saw a call on an internet policy mailing list to which she subscribed for new partners to cooperate with CYRILLA to add information from their own jurisdiction, and she contacted CYRILLA to offer a contribution about Hong Kong Internet Law material which would be sourced by herself and the Internet Law students during the course of the semester. Class activities have included identifying relevant Hong Kong materials in the form of legislation and case-law for a later inclusion in the CYRILLA Collaborative. A Google Doc was used to create a list of relevant legislation and case-law by students, which then formed the basis of the contribution to the CYRILLA Collaborative, using the project's format for legal data collection and contribution. Again, there was insufficient time in class to arrive at this final stage, and the need for consistency and quality control in the data contributed also necessitated a small group of people working on it in close communication with each other and directed by the professor. CYRILLA Collaborative lead and Harvard Berkman Klein Center Fellow Jessica Dheere was one of the guest lecturers via video-conference during the fifth seminar, when she Skyped from her base in Harvard (Cambridge MA) to give the class more information about the CYRILLA Collaborative, its background and in particular the events of the Arab Spring which gave rise for a need among digital rights advocates and NGOs in the Middle East and North Africa to have better knowledge about national laws affecting digital rights issues.

Internationalization at home can be better facilitated with the use of digital tools creating a more international environment and aligning overseas students and/or teaching staff from diverse cultural backgrounds, the use of digital space and tools allows students to communicate and inquire electronically, transcending the geographical limitation. Digitalization makes the learning environments more supportive for collaborative learning because well-designed digital tools can enable learners to visualize the process of negotiation, idea exchanges and co-creation of knowledge. With the aid of digital tools, the use of Google document as a shared class exercise, "the conceptual structures and processes become visible, accessible, and manipulable on a computer screen" (Reusser and Pauli, 2015, 916). The modern generation is referred to as a generation 'with social and digital participation' and 'more complex technology-mediated knowledge practices are both a result and a catalyst for deep learning that should also be pursued in educational settings' (Hietajärvi et al., 2015, 1165). Deep and durable learning can be achieved through students' active construction of knowledge, professor-student and student-student interactions by a variety of telecommunications tools (Hacker & Niederhauser, 2000). In order to promote active construction of

knowledge, discussion of issues on Internet Law was initiated by the professor using Google Docs as an online platform. This virtual discussion was highly effective in promoting student participation because as a class exercise, students were encouraged to exchange ideas and construct new knowledge collectively with the guidance of the professor being physically present in the classroom.

This collaboration project aiming at embedding international elements and utilizing digital tools could shed lights on HE curriculum development and work towards teaching excellence and in turn, benefit students' learning because the implementation of an innovative course design has been proven in this case study to greatly enhance the teaching and learning process. The impact of the implementation of digital tools in course activity design is lasting because students who had gained a more global perspective from the course of international elements could display the critical thinking skills in other courses and even other aspects in life. With a more global outlook, students could work better with others, consider peers' perspectives and compare between perspectives. This ability should not be restricted to a single discipline but to be practiced across disciplines.

For the discipline of law, some courses may lend themselves more easily to internationalisation (at home) than others. The specific course forming this case study is, as mentioned, on Internet and the Law. The transnational aspect of this technology, usage and applications, and the legal questions which have arisen since the Internet's implementation in the 1990s entail that Internet Law courses lend themselves more easily to internationalised approaches. This can be contrasted with some more jurisdiction-specific law courses such as constitutional or criminal law which may not be as easy to internationalise in terms of course content. Other challenges and limitations may comprise: the presence/absence of international exchange students in a course; the professor's own familiarity with the subject-material; and the demands and requirements of the centralised institutions such as the university, faculty or professional accreditation body. However, as specialised areas of law are increased transnationalising as a result of globalisation, trade and technology and the rise of 'large' jurisdictions as global governance powers, internationalisation of law courses ought to become increasingly important for educators and students to ensure that material is up-to-date, relevant and prepares students for work and life in a transnational environment.

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