



The IntlUni Principles

for quality teaching and learning in the multilingual
and multicultural learning space

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The IntlUni Principles for quality teaching and learning in the multilingual and multicultural learning space

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Introduction

In the development towards the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are facing new challenges: Students and teachers in higher education form much more heterogeneous groups than ever before, using a wide spectrum of languages and representing a wide spectrum of cultural backgrounds in what may be termed the Multilingual and Multicultural Learning Space (MMLS). To address these issues, the IntlUni project has produced a set of guiding principles for teaching and learning in the MMLS, which describe the development of quality in these highly diverse contexts in the EHEA.

In the MMLS, as in any educational environment, certain conditions for learning must be in place for the students to meet the intended outcomes of the courses taught. However, the MMLS is distinguished by the use of an academic *lingua franca* and by students with different knowledge systems and diverse ethnic, academic, disciplinary and linguistic backgrounds. The IntlUni Principles therefore reflect the diversity of the actors and contexts in the MMLS, which not only poses special challenges to learning but also creates rich opportunities for enhancing learning and intercultural competence. These challenges and opportunities have resulted in a wide variety of innovative and locally viable practices among the IntlUni partner HEIs. Project partners have provided substantial evidence of these practices in the form of examples relating to the institutional environment, educational processes (teaching and learning) and students' educational outcomes, and this has provided a significant foundation for the development of the IntlUni Principles. Yet it is also apparent that these practices are often localized or individual solutions produced by teachers or programme managers, whose dependence on specific local contexts may preclude transfer into different learning environments in other institutions.

We believe that the guiding principles which this project has derived from the examples of practice deserve greater and more explicit attention from all stakeholders, and that the implementation of such principles needs to be embedded in policy at institutional level and supported by adequate funding. Nevertheless, we recognize that when addressing quality issues in the MMLS, the local environment must be taken into consideration, as the achievement of quality depends on the requirements and conditions within a specific context. This project has included participating institutions from across Europe, and the

contexts in which these institutions operate vary enormously – as do the contexts of HEIs everywhere. This means that it is difficult to provide concrete recommendations for specific measures.

This has two consequences for the future implementation of such principles. Firstly, every institution needs to make its own local definition of the stakeholders involved in the educational process, and then to ensure that these stakeholders are involved in making meaningful local interpretations of the principles in each specific context. Secondly, we cannot prescribe the means for implementation of these principles because every institution has its own organizational and decision-making structures. Needless to say, implementation and funding will depend on the support of the individuals, committees and other bodies that make the decisions in each institution, and this is what we mean in this document when we refer to the institutional level.

Development of the IntlUni Principles

The IntlUni Principles are the result of a process of sample collection and analysis, consultation and validation in the group of IntlUni partners and among external stakeholders. They derive from almost a hundred different examples of local practices developed to meet a wide variety of challenges posed by the Multilingual and Multicultural Learning Space (MMLS) at the 38 European partner HEIs in the IntlUni network.

The practice examples were collected to illustrate institutional or individual solutions to the linguistic, cultural and didactic challenges identified in the first year of the project and subsequently synthesized in a report that was presented to and discussed by the whole partnership in a workshop. After further feedback from partners and external experts at a second workshop, the final version is presented here.

Each of the practice examples is obviously geared to a given context in which it has provided a good solution to the challenges at hand. While no one has fits all, the one-year process described above establishes some general quality principles that could – and should – work in different educational contexts across linguistic and cultural borders.

In addition to this process, a smaller number of illustrative samples – each of them based on one or more of the original practice examples – was compiled in order to illustrate each of the principles. These illustrative samples can be used as a point of reference by institutions when applying the principles in their further development of the MMLS.

The IntlUni Principles

The table below provides an overview of the interdependence of the different elements of the MMLS learning environment. These elements consist of three dimensions involving three corresponding focuses of activity and quality principles. For each dimension there is an actor – the institution, the teacher and the student, respectively – who influences a process which is described as the focus of activity. The quality

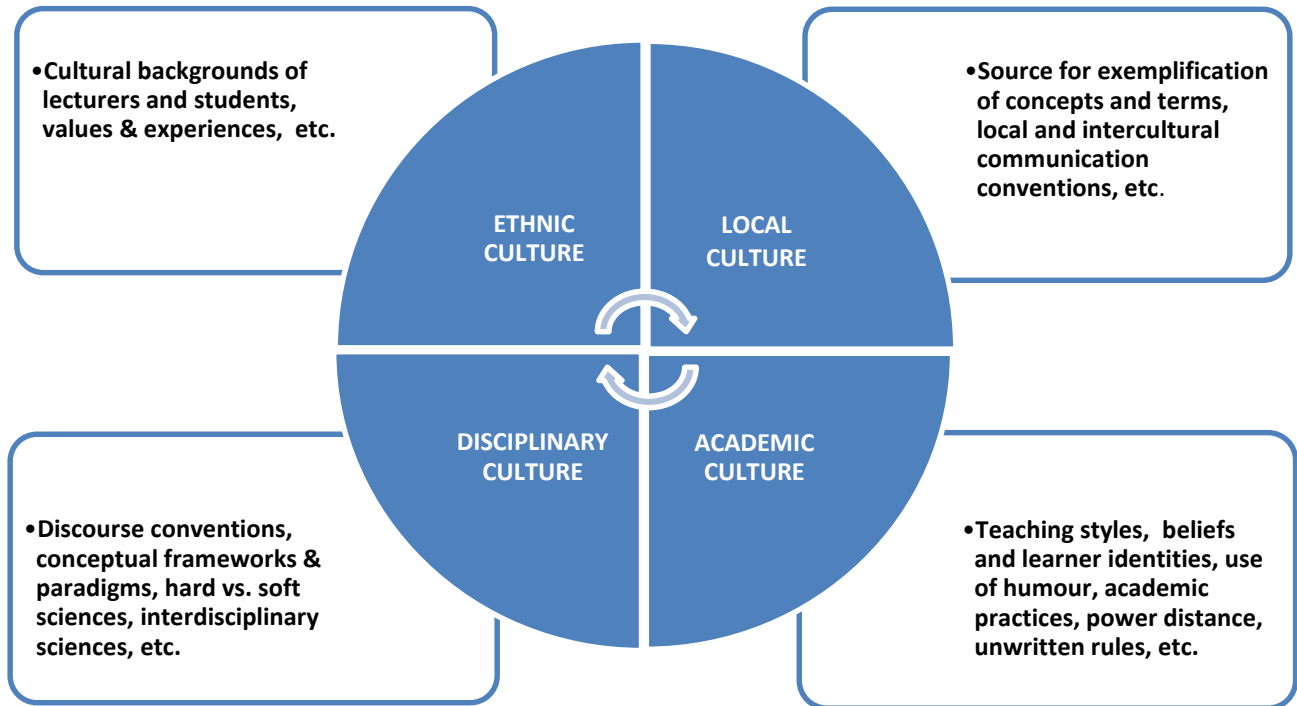
principles describe the conditions under which these processes can lead to the successful fulfillment of learning outcomes in all disciplines across the curriculum.

Dimension (actor)	Focus of activity (process)	Quality principles (conditions)
1. The institution	Educational context & institutional environment	1. Providing an inclusive learning space 1.1 Providing institutional support for learning-conducive environments 1.2 Integrating students and staff in the institution
2. The teacher	Educational processes	2. Raising awareness about teaching and learning processes 2.1 Reflecting on teaching approaches and negotiating learning processes 2.2 Managing and leveraging diversity
3. The student	Educational outcomes	3. Developing one's own cultural identity and extending one's knowledge base 3.1 Benefitting from awareness of cultural differences and the ability to deal with linguistic diversity 3.2 Acquiring and applying contextual and intercultural knowledge to different cultural contexts

The approach to culture adopted by this project is illustrated by the following model for culture in the internationalization of higher education, which was highlighted during Work Package 3.¹

This broad, multidimensional concept of culture encompasses the different practices and underlying assumptions and attitudes that HE teachers and students bring to the international classroom. This understanding of culture applies throughout the text below.

¹ The culture model is based on Räsänen, A. 2011. International classrooms, disciplinary cultures and communication conventions: a report on a workshop for content and language teachers. *Quality Assurance Review for Higher Education*. Bucharest: ARACIS, Vol.3, No. 2, pp 155-161 and Flowerdew, J. & L. Miller. 1995. On the notion of culture in L2 lectures. *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 29/ 2, pp 345-373.



The Institution

Principle 1: Providing an inclusive learning space

Principle 1.1: Providing institutional support for learning-conducive environments

To establish the necessary conditions for learning in environments that are characterized by diversity, all stakeholders in the institution (managers, administrators and teachers) must cooperate to provide an inclusive learning-conducive environment. Strategies for ensuring this kind of environment include providing the teaching staff with appropriate didactic training in how to deal with diversity and how to teach in international settings, clearly communicating standards and expectations to all students, and linguistically and culturally preparing relevant administrative staff, teachers and students to function interculturally using an academic *lingua franca* in a multilingual and multicultural environment.

Above all, to ensure the successful implementation of the MMLS, institutions should develop an inclusive and enabling language and culture policy, in which the role of an academic *lingua franca*, other languages and cultures is clearly defined. Such policy decisions need to be supported with communication and training initiatives for all teaching, managerial and administrative staff, so that they are made fully aware of the MMLS and its implications for their daily work, and that they are equipped with relevant language and diversity management skills.

It is important that institutions guarantee and monitor the implementation of such a policy by ensuring that all students have the requisite language and academic communication skills to commence studying

in international programmes. Students also need support in developing their study skills, including academic language training, and they need support in the discipline-specific language that they will use to communicate in their future careers. As well as the regular classroom, students should be provided with virtual and other digital learning spaces that allow them to learn while making wider connections.

Principle 1.2: Integrating students and staff in the institution

The institution should take specific measures to pave the way for the social and cultural integration of students outside the classroom, thereby establishing a welcoming culture for foreign students. These measures could range from appropriate information materials (both before and upon arrival), support with administrative matters outside the institution (such as housing, financial issues, transportation, etc.), specifically trained staff with relevant language skills for counselling and coaching, and the provision of places and events where local and foreign students can meet and learn to live and study together. In this way, HEIs should become platforms for international living and learning.

The Teacher

Principle 2: Raising awareness about teaching and learning processes

Principle 2.1: Reflecting on teaching approaches and negotiating learning processes

To further “level the playing field” and ensure that the knowledge and resources of all students are valued, teaching staff should take the time to discuss the teaching and learning processes in the international classroom. The teaching staff should explicitly communicate standards and expectations to all students. This involves being explicit about and discussing teacher roles, approaches and expectations. It also involves adjusting and individualizing teaching styles and foregrounding differences between national/local and disciplinary academic cultures and knowledge systems.

This also involves a process of negotiation or co-construction to ensure that the strategies of learners and teachers are compatible with the constructive alignment of teaching, learning and assessment. This may also mean embracing a change in methodologies, such as team teaching (language and subject teachers), peer-tutoring, and tandem learning, as well as reflection on these processes. All of this should also entail an appropriate integration of technology into the teaching and learning process.

Principle 2.2: Managing and leveraging diversity

Teachers must also aim towards integrating all students in the learning environment. This involves not only managing but also leveraging the diversity to help students develop intercultural competence, empathy and knowledge of the effects of cultural diversity. This can be achieved by promoting interactive learning through teambuilding and collaboration, using the cultural diversity of the students as a resource, and openly discussing cultural differences and cultural expectations.

Strategies for integration and inclusion might include teaching the history and culture of the host country to all students and giving students the opportunity to present their own cultures. This can be combined with or support the teaching of the national/local language at all levels, as well as the discussion and acceptance of code-switching practices.

The student

Principle 3: Developing one's own cultural identity and extending one's knowledge base

Principle 3.1: Benefitting from awareness of cultural differences and the ability to deal with linguistic diversity

Students should be given the opportunity to reflect on and enrich their identities by learning about culture and language through a mutually supportive group process. This involves bringing linguistic and cultural diversity to the forefront through such activities as encouraging language learning in combination with reflection on identity, explaining cultural differences and discussing cultural and conceptual differences. For example, students may be explicitly asked to develop an analysis that is different to the one they would instinctively develop on the basis of their own culturally-embedded understandings. This also involves including open-mindedness and tolerance as educational outcomes, developing empathy, and integrating languages into the curriculum of all subjects.

Principle 3.2: Acquiring and applying contextual and intercultural knowledge to different cultural contexts

The knowledge base of students can be broadened by encouraging peer learning and extending course content and materials across borders. This results in the relation of educational outcomes to other, often less familiar contexts. In the MMLS, students are not only confronted with the cultures that other students bring with them but also with the (conceptual) contexts from which those students come. They learn that ideas or applications that are relevant in their own contexts may not work in other contexts for reasons of, for instance, infrastructure, technology, geography and climate. Students and their teachers need to take into consideration both the intercultural and contextual aspects of this "otherness". Students from other countries become a resource in the extension of knowledge, and interaction needs to be designed purposefully so that this process is made explicit to all parties.



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