

Generation I: International and invisible in a workforce education and development programme's curriculum content

Debra Ferdinand

School of Education, The University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago

Caribbean students continue to add to the increasing international enrolment at tertiary institutions in the United States of America. But to what extent is such internationalisation visible in the curriculum content for a Mid-Western university's graduate workforce education and development (WED) programme? This descriptive study is part of a larger curriculum inclusiveness study that included an examination of students' perceptions on international responsiveness of their WED graduate programme's curriculum course content. A combination of the follow-up explanations model and the within-stage mixed model was used, coupled with pragmatism, as the overarching paradigm for guiding the collection and analysis of the study's census survey data and follow-up focus groups. The findings indicate a very US-centric WED curriculum content with large deficits for inclusion of works by international authors as well as global views to include those from developing countries. As a result, WED international students were subjected to intellectual bondage and invisibility within the curriculum content, which compromised the quality of their education at tuition costs to them almost three times that of US students. Implications of this international responsiveness challenge of a WED programme's curriculum content include limited learning transfer for international students coming from developing countries such as those in the Caribbean. International and US students' suggestions for improving the curriculum's international responsiveness included diversifying/internationalising WED curriculum content and hiring international faculty. These suggestions were strongly supported by the theoretical and empirical literature on multicultural education and internationalisation in higher education.

Key words: internationalisation, multicultural education, workforce education and development

Introduction

The United States of America (US) continues to host the largest number of international post-secondary students worldwide. The US saw a five percent increase to 727, 277 international students at its tertiary institutions for the academic year 2010/2011 compared to the United Kingdom's (UK) 428, 225 total for international students for the same academic period (GoStudyUK, nd). Caribbean students, who are in close proximity to the US, accounted for 1.6% or 11,644 of the total

727, 277 studying at US tertiary institutions with the top three contributing islands being Jamaica (3,172), Trinidad and Tobago (1,882), and Bahamas (1,720). Though visibly under-represented when compared to other international students from the top five contributing countries to the US: China (157,558), India (103,895), South Korea (73,351), Canada (27,546) and Taiwan (24,818) respectively (Institute of International Education, 2012), Caribbean students are welcomed by US tertiary institutions as international students are a significant source of 'cultural currency' and financial revenue for US institutions. The tuition rates for international students are usually two to three times that of American students and international students contributed a total of US \$21 billion to the US economy for the academic year 2010/2011 (Institute of International Education, 2012).

Consequently, US tertiary institutions are aggressively marketing for international/visa students, who represent approximately 5% of the total student population on US campuses. Facing harsh budget cuts and growing student enrolment competition at home, US tertiary institutions see international student enrolment as a possible solution to these challenges (Choudaha & Chang, 2012). With large disparities between US domestic and international student enrolment, academic departments are faced with the challenge of ensuring that all student groups are represented and that no one group feels invisible with respect to curriculum content. This challenge of internationally responsive curriculum content becomes critical to foreign students on government scholarships who *must* apply their new knowledge and skills to local work problems or innovations on return to their home countries. The current study asks the fundamental question: To what extent is the curriculum content of a graduate workforce education and development (WED) programme at a Mid-Western university internationally responsive to its students?

Workforce education and development

Workforce education and development (WED) as a field of study has its roots in vocational education (VE). The apprenticeship system brought by the early British colonists in the 17th Century is one of the original forms of VE. In the US, apprentices were required to engage in a work-based curriculum under the supervision of a master craftsman in exchange for work. However, the industrialised society of the 1800s required a more skilled workforce, which prompted the addition of theory and labs along with manual work to the VE curriculum (Barlow, 1967; Wonacott, 2003; Gordon, 2003). The landmark Smith Hughes Act of 1917 gave rise to the separation of VE from the academic curriculum at US institutions, defining it as the "preparation for occupations requiring other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree" (Gordon, 2003, p. 15). By the end of the 1990s, the American Vocational Association (AVA) found that the term "vocational" was perceived by its members as negative and outdated. As a result, the AVA changed its name to Association of Career and Technical Education (ACTE) (Gordon, 2003).

Subsequently, legislation that supported funding for Career and Technical Education (CTE) by the US federal government increasingly required the integration of CTE with academic curricula. The latter was in response to the need for developing a highly skilled US workforce that would compete in today's global market (US Department of Education, 2006). In the 1990s a Mid-Western university was among the first in the US to change its Vocational Educational Studies department to Workforce Education and Development (Waugh & Ruppel, 2004). This name change reflected the new emphasis on workforce development echoed in subsequent CTE funding legislation and the shift away from the "vocational" stigma. Ranked among the top ten WED programmes in the US (Sum, McCaskey & Kyeyune, 2010), the WED department's mission involves working to develop a world-class workforce. Given Caribbean governments' ongoing thrust to enhance its workforce development nationally and regionally (Joseph, 2013), the Mid-Western university's WED programme is potentially attractive to Caribbean students (the researcher is among the few graduates of this WED program). Upon graduation, "WEDians" could hold positions that include training specialist, human resource and development specialist, learning facilitator, or workforce development specialists.

International visibility issues/challenges in WED curriculum content

Inadequate evaluation data

Efforts to make curriculum content internationally responsive to students are partly influenced by the diversity of students and feedback from course evaluation data. The Mid-Western university embarked on a diversity thrust in 2004 that included increasing international student enrolment and institutional visits by its representatives to universities in China (two student recruitment centres already exist) and Taiwan were undertaken to boost such efforts. As such, it is important for this Mid-Western university to be internationally responsive in its curriculum content to students. In 2009, the Mid-Western university enrolled a total of 20,350 students including 1,051 international students; representing approximately 5% of the total student population. Its WED graduate student enrolment, the target group of this current study, reflected the growing diversity of US campuses. At the time of this study, the breakdown of student ethnicity for the WED master's programme was as follows: 126 Caucasian; 55 African American; 8 Hispanic; 3 Asian (1%); 11 US students of unknown origin, and 11 international students - giving a total of 214 students. A similar breakdown for WED doctoral students was as follows: 41 Caucasian; 3 African American; 2 US students of unknown origin, and 8 international students - giving a total of 54 students.

Given that there are so few international students on the WED programme, data gathered from this group would result, most likely, in course improvements being based on the aggregate majority responses (white US students) by default. This would not necessarily address any curriculum content concerns such as the invisibility in curriculum content of international perspectives relating to the background of

the international student. It is anticipated that the numbers of Caribbean students would increase in the future partly due to the aggressive international marketing by US tertiary institutions that hoped to attract Caribbean students who are in close proximity to the US and whose governments have embarked on a workforce development thrust (Joseph, 2013). Thus, this study specifically examined an area of significance to future Caribbean students. This was done through analysing the perceptions of three graduate student groups (US majority students, US minority students and international students) for the international responsiveness of WED curriculum content. In this study, international responsiveness refers to adequately providing international perspectives to include those from developing countries on WED course topics.

Host-country curriculum

Another issue of contention for international students is the debate on curriculum diversification. One argument is that universities with high enrolment of international students are obligated to modify their curriculum accordingly, while others with limited numbers are not obligated to do so (Selvadurai, 1992). Li (1992) contended that some resistance to curricular modification by faculty may be valid since cultural issues were not consistent from one semester to another, since international students came from different countries and changed every semester. Yet, research on the benefits of diversity convincingly shows that curriculum diversification has numerous benefits such as increased intercultural competence for both international and home-based students and instructors (Adelman, 1997; Clark, 2002; Green, 2002; Smith & Schonfeld, 2000).

Other studies reported cross-border curriculum concerns for international students. Mehra and Bishop's (2007) case study of international doctoral students in a library and information science (LIS) programme on a US campus revealed their invisibility in curriculum content. Significant findings from this qualitative study included: LIS international students found the course literature was too "US-centric"; it ignored the international perspectives, and the nature of LIS called for more collaboration with international counterparts in learning global perspectives, which did not form an integral part of their learning experiences. Consequently, these international students experienced intellectual bondage (Falmer, 1940) in a costly US higher education system that did not prepare them for the global job market of LIS. The latter gives relevance to the current study that includes international responsiveness of WED curriculum content.

Limited learning transfer

One of the ethical foundations of WED is to promote the effective transfer of learning to the workplace (Gray & Herr, 1998). Near-learning transfer such as applying knowledge and skills learnt to practice exercises in the classroom is easier for students to master. In contrast, far-learning transfer that requires application of skills and knowledge to new situations in the workplace away from the class

or training room setting (Schunk, 2004) has proven to be problematic in the past for international students. Powell (2001) reported that an internal review by the United States Agency for International Development of 212 aid-funded educational projects implemented in developing countries showed 90% to be unsustainable. Factors contributing to this failure included poor project management and misunderstanding the local cultural context in which technical and vocational education and training (TVET) was delivered. Che (2007) also found a similar disconnect in analysing the influence of westernised methods of education on 14 Cameroonian TVET instructors in four secondary schools. Che summarised that “not only has Westernism disconnected many Cameroonian teachers from themselves, but it also introduced a logic of domination which values exploitation of resources, quantification and prediction of nature, and objectification of reality” (p. 343). Stuart (2013) also noted in reviewing the literature on transfer of TVET models from developed to developing countries that “it becomes evident that regardless of where a country looks, to Europe, Asia, or the United States, TVET programs and policies are not easily replicated due to the unique factors within the country where they are implemented” (p. 6).

Nevertheless, it is worthy to note that some US faculty has showed concern for international students learning in a US-centric context. Trice (2004) interviewed faculty in four departments at a US university on their perceptions regarding the benefits and challenges of international students' enrolment. One anticipated challenge US faculty identified was international students' ability to apply knowledge and skills learnt in a specific US programme context to their home context after graduation. The Mid-Western university's WED programme is somewhat context-specific as the US has moved away from using the term “vocational”, but in other parts of the world such a programme might be titled “Technical and Vocational Education and Training”. Students from developing countries in such a WED programme would face the challenge of having to modify a developed model of WED with all its layers to fit in a developing context.

De Vita and Case (2003) also found comparable cross-border challenges for UK higher education when exported to other countries. British accreditation criteria for offering UK academic programmes in other countries were found to be culturally incompatible with local education systems and customs, making compliance with such criteria difficult for importing countries. Still, efforts are ongoing to reduce such incompatibility of growing cross-border education in today's globalised market place. For example, in addition to national and inter-institutional quality assurance and accreditation systems for regulating higher education in member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), elements of “a system of ‘multiple accreditation’, where there are several accreditation procedures for different purposes ... [are] expanding at a rapid pace” (OECD/CERI, 2003, p. 10). More recent developments from a survey supporting comprehensive internationalisation on US campuses shows institutions undertaking initiatives to internationalise undergraduate curricula but “the percentage of institutions that require undergraduates to take courses that

primarily feature perspectives, issues, or events from countries outside the United States decreased across all sectors nationally (from 37 percent to 29 percent)” (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 11). A consequence of this trend might be US faculty not being motivated to include more international perspectives in curricula content. The current study would give an indication of the extent to which international perspectives are visible in the curriculum content for a WED graduate programme at a Mid-Western university.

Theoretical framework

Theoretical frameworks used in analysing issues concerning internationalisation include ethnocentrism, internationalisation, critical education theory, and multicultural education. Walker-Tileston (2004) explained that ethnocentrism “is the belief that one’s own ethnicity is superior to others” (p. 70), which can be a major barrier to US faculty or curriculum developers including non-US content into course materials. Therefore, while ethnocentrism helps to possibly explain the dominant US-centric curriculum of the host country, it is not conducive to internationally responsive curriculum content. In contrast, internationalisation requires “incorporating global perspectives into teaching, learning, and research; building international and intercultural competence among students, faculty, and staff” (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 3). According to Smith and Schonfeld (2000), a diversified or internationalised curriculum helps faculty to develop cultural competence in accommodating international diversity among the student body. Both students and faculty can develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills in having to consider a non-US perspective in their teaching and learning, and the latter may prepare them for the cultural diversity in the 21st Century global workforce.

Further, critical education theory places the curriculum beyond a mere programme of study, course text, or syllabus. Mostly inspired by the work of the Frankfurt School of critical theory in Europe before World War II, critical education theory has only emerged in the US over the last three decades. Critical education theorists raise awareness of the hidden curriculum, which include the unintended outcomes of the schooling process such as acceptable mediocrity for minorities that place limits on their school performance (McLaren, 2003). They are also concerned with “how descriptions, discussions, and representations in textbooks, curriculum materials, course content, and social relations embodied in classroom practices benefit dominant groups and exclude subordinate ones” (McLaren, 2003, p. 212). Applying such tenets to internationalisation of curriculum content would take into consideration perspectives by international authors on course topics first rather than international perspectives by US authors that could skew international students into a US-centric view. Similarly, multicultural education, emerging from the 1960s US Civil Rights Movement) primarily facilitates assimilation among diverse groups in multicultural classrooms (Piland, Piland, & Hess 1999). Given the growing cultural and international student diversity of US campuses, multicultural

education would also help to make teachers aware of the need to accommodate multicultural and international perspectives, to include those from Caribbean authors, in their course materials.

Method

This descriptive study used a mixed methods design to examine graduate students' perceptions on the international responsiveness of WED curriculum content. A combination of the follow-up explanations model (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) and the within-stage mixed method model (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) were employed in the research design. In phase one of the study, the within-stage model facilitated the concurrent collection of quantitative data via closed-ended survey questions and qualitative data via open-ended survey questions. In phase two, the follow-up explanations model was used to further explain the survey findings through follow-up focus groups. Pragmatism was found to be appropriate for guiding the data collection and analysis of the study's census data and follow-up focus groups because this methodology emphasizes what works in practice (Rescher, 2000). Relevant peer-reviewed journals, dissertations, scholarly books, professional websites, and online databases were searched using descriptors such as *internationalisation, multicultural education, and critical education theory*.

Study population

Study participants comprised WED master's and doctoral students with at least one year of continuous enrolment in the WED programme. This was to allow for adequate exposure to the WED curriculum content for answering survey items. All participants received the study survey as the population was too small for sampling. This also allowed for the opportunity to capture data from the under-represented, culturally diverse groups that included international students in the WED programme. A total of 163 students met the criteria for participating in the study according to information requested and supplied by the Mid-Western university's WED department and student information system. Six deductions from this list accounted for one exemption (the researcher) and five students used in pilot testing the study instrument, bringing the final total of the study population to 157: 146 home students and 11 international students. The breakdown of the home students was: 107 Caucasian, 30 African American, 5 Hispanic, 1 Asian American and 3 students of unknown origin. The breakdown of the 11 international students was: 4 Asian, 3 African, 1 European, 1 Middle Eastern, 1 Latin American and 1 Caribbean.

Research process

A self-reported WED Curriculum Responsiveness survey was developed from studies in the literature that measured constructs of interests to include international responsiveness inclusiveness. This survey was deemed valid and reliable as the Cronbach's alpha for the survey's three curriculum responsiveness scales (to include *international responsiveness*) resulted in a high internal consistency rating

of .850. Three subject-matter experts (African American, Asian, and Hispanic) reviewed the draft survey for content validity and revisions were made accordingly. In addition, two pilot tests were conducted with representative groups to increase instrument validity and further revisions were done before administering the final survey as recommended by Best and Khan (2006). The Midwestern university's Human Subjects Committee gave approval and permission for accessing student e-mail messages from the university's student information system. The fillable PDF survey required demographic information to include ethnic and/or national origin, gender, graduate status (master's or doctoral), and three curriculum responsiveness scales, one of which was international responsiveness. Participants were required to rank WED international responsiveness items on a 5-point verbal frequency scale with 1 being 'don't know' and 5 being 'nearly always.' An open ended question on suggestions for improvements included one on improving international perspectives in WED curriculum content.

The first administration of the survey sent via e-mail contained a cover letter notifying participants of voluntary participation and assuring confidentiality in data collection. A response rate of 15 e-mail surveys prompted the use of a paper-based survey for distribution in WED courses once students agreed and instructors permitted it. Using this method, 54 completed surveys were collected. The wide disparity in number of surveys collected by e-mail and paper-based distribution did not warrant any tests of significance on these responses. Of the total 157 students surveyed, one student (Hispanic) opted to withdraw, one e-mail was undeliverable, and one e-mail survey was returned blank. The overall response rate was 44%, which is above the 35% acceptance response rate for survey research (Best & Khan, 2006). In controlling for non-response error, a comparison was done on geographic/ethnic origin demographics for respondents and non-respondents and no substantial differences were found.

In keeping with the mixed methods follow-up explanations model, participants from the survey pool were asked to volunteer for follow-up focus groups to collect qualitative data for further explaining survey results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). A total of 13 participants volunteered representing diverse ethnic backgrounds, including African American, Asian, African, and Caucasian students with more than one year enrolment in the WED graduate programme. There were four males and nine females, with three international students speaking English as their second language. It is suggested that a minimum of four persons is required for conducting a focus group (Stokes, 2003); hence, the composition of the three groups consisted of two groups of four and one group of five participants with the researcher moderating the focus groups. Consent forms were disseminated for participants' signatures and included a focus group consent statement, a description of the purpose of the focus group, assurance of confidentiality/anonymity, and other instructions. The researcher followed an interview protocol using five trigger questions that were previously pilot tested and had emerged from the survey findings as needing further explanation. Each focus group lasted approximately 90 minutes. Recorded field notes from three focus group observers

and verbatim transcription of the video-taped focus groups reflected pseudo names for participants to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. These procedures met ethical guidelines required for conducting focus groups (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were mainly used to analyse the survey quantitative data for frequency distributions and measures of central tendencies for student demographics and graduate students' perceptions of WED curriculum content inclusiveness. These statistical measures were deemed suitable as the study's census data were mainly nominal (e.g. gender and type of programme) and ordinal or ranked data (e.g. verbal frequency scale with 1 being "don't know" to 5 being "nearly always"). As such, non-parametric tests were used as the study survey consisted of census data and not a sample of the study population (Best & Khan, 2006). The study's nominal data such as gender, ethnicity, and type of programme were analysed using frequency counts. As such, no tests of significance were performed as these would require ordinal data mainly used in the verbal frequency scales for ranking the curriculum responsiveness of the WED content. In addition, frequency counts and ranking data do not qualify for parametric tests (Best & Khan, 2006). The follow-up focus groups helped to verify and validate the quantitative findings in compensating for tests of significance.

In keeping with best practice, the median was used as the measure of central tendency as it is not affected by extreme values and recommended as the better average to use for the study's ordinal data (Alreck & Settle, 1995). Content analysis was used to analyse the open-ended survey responses on suggestions for improvements and the focus group data. Emerging patterns and themes were observed and a quantified summary of trends done. Member-checking of focus group summaries and survey open-ended responses help to verify the accuracy of these findings, thereby improving the validity and reliability of the study results. Likened to other cross-cultural studies using the follow-up explanations model, the current study reflected the pragmatic paradigm in using a multi-method approach that afforded triangulation of the methods and cross-checking of the findings (Aldridge, Fraser & Huang, 1999). Cross-validating and explaining the quantitative survey data with this qualitative data (triangulation) help to increase the reliability and validity of the survey findings as suggested by Best and Khan (2006).

Results

Demographics

A total of 69 participants responded to the survey comprising 39 females and 30 males with a graduate status showing 41 master's and 28 doctoral students. All respondents had one or more years of continuous enrolment on the Mid-Western university's WED programme. A further breakdown of the 69 respondents by student groups showed the following: 41 US majority (Caucasians), 17 US minority and 11 international students. The international students geographic origins were

as follows: Asia, Africa, Europe, Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The US minority student population group comprised African Americans, an Asian American, and one student of unknown origin.

Research question and survey

The primary research study question was as follows: To what extent is the curriculum content for a graduate workforce education and development (WED) programme at this Mid-Western university internationally responsive to its students? International responsiveness referred to the inclusion of international perspectives to include those from developing countries in WED course content. In answering the primary research question, students (US minority, US majority, and international groups) had to rank WED content on a 5-point verbal frequency scale in relation to the following:

- *WED curricular materials adequately provide international perspectives on course topics.*
- *Works by international authors are selected in presenting global views in curriculum content.*
- *Global views on course topics in WED curriculum include those from developing countries.*
- *US research is preferred to that from other international countries by faculty.*

A further open ended survey question asked:

- *How can WED curriculum content be improved to accommodate international perspectives?*

Results for all three student groups are presented in Table 1 with the median (*Mdn*) used as the single indicator for reporting grouped student responses. Students' ratings on the international responsiveness of the WED curriculum content generally indicated that adequate provision of international perspectives on course topic occurred sometimes, suggesting that at times such provision was inadequate. However, the extent to which this inadequacy occurred differed among student groups. For the international students, which included one Caribbean student, a large deficit exists for inclusion of works by international authors and global views from developing countries in WED content. They found that the latter almost never occurred in WED content.

The US majority and minority students found WED curriculum content was 'Sometimes' internationally responsive for three of the four aspects in Table 1 and that US research tended to be preferred to that from other international

countries by faculty. These results suggested a smaller global knowledge gap for these two groups in WED curriculum content than the international student group. However, US majority students showed more consensus in their “Don’t know” frequency rating for all four aspects of international responsiveness in WED content.

Notably, unlike other student groups, several US majority students mostly checked “Don’t know” for the aspects of international responsiveness from the survey results. Yet, the overall comments, of which the largest number came from the majority group, strongly indicated that the WED curriculum content was very US-centric and needed to be diversified. These findings indicate that a slight anomaly existed in the survey results for the US majority students on international responsiveness and needed further explanation for understanding in follow-up focus groups.

Table 1. Graduate students’ frequency ratings for WED curriculum international responsiveness

<i>n</i> =69								
Aspects	Group	<i>n</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	NA	QO	ST	AN	DK
WED curricular materials adequately provide international perspectives on course topics.	MAJ	41	3.0	2	12	9	7	10
	MIN	17	3.0	1	5	5	3	2
	INT	11	3.0	0	1	7	3	0
Works by international authors are selected in presenting global views in curriculum content.	MAJ	41	3.0	2	8	14	4	13
	MIN	17	3.0	2	8	14	4	13
	INT	11	2.0	1	0	4	3	3
Global views on course topics in WED curriculum include those from developing countries	MAJ	41	3.0	0	8	13	9	11
	MIN	17	3.0	0	2	9	2	3
	INT	11	2.0	1	0	4	2	3
US research is preferred to that from other international countries by faculty.	MAJ	41	4.0	6	7	4	4	20
	MIN	17	3.0	3	3	5	1	4
	INT	11	2.0	3	1	1	3	3

Note. MAJ = US majority, MIN = US minority, INT = international

Scale. NA = Nearly always (*Mdn*= 5), QO = Quite often (*Mdn*= 4), ST = Sometimes (*Mdn*= 3), AN = Almost never (*Mdn*= 2), DK = Don’t know (*Mdn*= 1)

Follow-up focus groups

As required by the follow-up explanations model, distinguishing and non-distinguishing survey results were identified for follow-up in focus groups to gain a deeper insight into these results. In addition, the focus group data also helped to cross-check the suggestions for improvements for bias as these were included on the same survey and not as a separate semi-structured one. A total of 13 participants volunteered; representing a range of backgrounds including African American, Asian, African, Caribbean and Caucasian. The composition of the three groups consisted of four, four, and five participants that included at least one international

student, one minority US student, and one US majority student in each of the three groups. Students' specific ethnic/geographic origins are not mentioned to protect their identities given the sensitive nature of the research topic. The researcher moderated the focus groups to include a general kick-off question on international responsiveness: *Do WED curriculum materials adequately address international perspectives and what in your learning experience has shaped your view or influenced your response on this?*

In sharing their experiences of the issue of international responsiveness, students gave reasons for this international deficit. One US minority student felt that there were too few international faculty in commenting: "I'm sure that's why we're missing that [international perspectives] is because the instructors are usually one type of group rather than, ah, international" (hands gesticulating accordingly). A US majority student counteracted by remarking: "but it's sometime hard to move from point A, which is centred around the United States to point B, which is a more global economy. I think that, you know, the curriculum just hasn't been tweaked along the way". Still, in responding to a speculative reason by a US majority student for the lack of global views that generally, foreigners perceive Americans as being desensitised to other cultures, an international student responded: "Yes, they are. That's the word in town" (response draws a burst of laughter from around the table). These shared reasons representative of the three student groups may help to explain why approximately 33% of the majority students checked "Don't know" for the aspects of international responsiveness in the survey results. It appears that they are oriented towards a US-centric curriculum and don't know how to recognise perspectives other than their own in it or even when such perspectives are missing. Students' suggestions for accommodating more international perspectives in WED curriculum content showed much consensus across student groups and paralleled the same themes for the survey open-ended results on suggestions for improvements on accommodating international perspectives which included curriculum diversification and internationalisation. These recommendations from US majority students reflect the view of most students, "at least have one objective ... for individual research on a different organisation or ... company outside ... the US" and "[at the] very base bottom line, you have a course on international workforce education and development".

Focus group reactions to the international responsiveness of the WED curriculum content across all three groups reflected limited representation of international perspectives and, by extension, the suggestion of increasing international perspectives to improve the WED curriculum content (see Table 2).

Table 2. Theme and group response frequencies for WED content international responsiveness

Emerging themes	n= 13		
	MAJ (n= 5)	MIN (n= 4)	INT (n= 4)
International perspectives limited	5	2	3
Multicultural desensitvity	1	0	1
Hire more international staff	1	1	2
Curriculum diversification	2	1	1
Increase curriculum internationalisation	2	2	3

Note. MAJ = US majority; MIN = US minority; and INT = international

Discussion, conclusion, and recommendations

The purpose of this research was to examine graduate students' perceptions on the international responsiveness of WED curriculum content at a Mid-Western university. Empirical evidence from study findings of this snapshot in time suggests that this Mid-Western university's international responsiveness in WED curriculum content is insufficient, giving them little understanding of international students' concerns and perspectives. A key survey result (see Table 1) shows that unlike the US majority and minority groups, international students found international authors and global views to include those from developing countries are almost never used in WED content. Further, open-ended responses on improvement suggestions support these quantitative results in students' clarion call for curriculum diversification to include international and minority perspectives in WED curriculum content. These findings suggest that WED graduate students' preparation is geared toward a US perspective, leaving them with a deficit in global views and perspectives on WED topics, including those from developing countries. The latter demonstrates some contradiction to the Mid-Western university's diversity initiative and its WED department's mission of producing world-class graduates. Further, in keeping with the study's dominant mixed methods follow-up explanation model with pragmatism as the underlying philosophical assumption (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), focus group results help to further explain students' call for more diverse and international perspectives in curriculum content. These follow-up explanations highlighted reasons based on students' own interaction with WED curriculum content and its classroom delivery which included limited international faculty and lack of curriculum update in keeping with the rapid globalisation of the workplace.

This research suggests that WED international responsiveness in its curriculum content is inadequate, which helps to confirm the repeated call in the literature for more international perspectives in US curricular content (De Vita & Case, 2003; Mehra & Bishop, 2007; Green, 2002). This study adds to the ongoing discourse in the literature on internationalisation of curriculum content especially for the field of WED. Notably, high paying international students are not

receiving adequate global views in WED curriculum content. This raises concern about their ability to effectively apply knowledge and skills learnt in a US context-specific programme to work situations in their home countries (Powell, 2001; Trice, 2004). This supposedly negative unintended outcome of the WED curriculum is reflective of critical education theory that is concerned with how “curriculum materials, course content, and social relations embodied in classroom practices benefit dominant groups and exclude subordinate ones” (McLaren, 2003, p. 212). Moreover, students’ unanimous suggestion for improvement to diversify and internationalise WED curriculum content resounds with findings in the literature on multicultural education (Piland, Piland, & Hess 1999) and improving the quality of the international responsiveness curriculum in higher education (American Council on Education, 2012; Smith & Schonfeld, 2000; Mestenhauser & Ellingboe, 1998).

More internationally responsive WED curriculum content may also help to address “invisibility” issues. The ethnocentric view (Walker-Tileston, 2004) of a dominant host-country curriculum coupled with its resulting intellectual bondage (Falmer, 1940), especially for international students, can be reduced such that international students, who pay more than twice the tuition cost of a US student, at this Mid-Western university would be provided with a comparable quality of higher education. In the case of Caribbean students, whose countries have varying exchange rates with the US dollar, resulting in exorbitant tuition costs in some instances, there might be more confident about venturing into a US higher education experience. In addition, the move in the US to develop more comprehensive accreditation systems (American Council on Education, 2012) can help to improve the quality of higher education for international students. The quality of their educational experience would be potentially more enriching and this could positively impact their performance both abroad and on return home. Potential benefits for US faculty and students deriving from improved international perspectives in WED curriculum content include developing high levels of creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving skills (Smith & Schonfeld, 2000). However, ongoing evaluation to measure the impact of this diversity initiative would be required, most likely with the use of a revised ICE form that would capture student ethnic diversity/geographic origin and instructor intercultural competence. Caribbean governments overseeing scholarships for their students abroad can liaise with receiving universities to address issues of host-country curriculum and Caribbean students could do more in-depth background checks before making the choice to study abroad.

Recommendations for future research include replicating this study using a larger randomised data set to include both traditional and online students in other US regions in order to address the limitations of a study with a small population. A follow-up tracer study on international students’ far-learning transfer for the application of their WED skills and knowledge in their home countries could also be undertaken in order to determine the extent of such transfer and identify areas for improvement in WED curriculum content. These recommended research studies would help to address limitations evident in this descriptive study. These

include the potential bias resulting from the use of the study's self-reported survey. The findings of this research cannot be easily generalised (no random sampling done) to other populations, but workforce educators in similar settings should take note of these findings and relate them to their context accordingly.

References

- Adelman, C. (1997). Diversity: Walk the walk and drop the talk. *Change*, 29(4), 1-13.
- Aldridge, J. M., Fraser, B. J., & Huang, T. I. (1999). Investigating classroom environments in Taiwan and Australia with multiple research methods. *The Journal of Educational Research* 93(1), 48-62.
- Alreck, P. L., & Settle, R. B. (1995). *The survey research handbook* (2nd ed.). Boston, Massachusetts: Irwin McGraw-Hill.
- American Council on Education (2012). *Mapping internationalization on US campuses*. Retrieved from <http://www.acenet.edu/links/pdfs/cige/MappingInternationalizationonUSCampuses2012>
- Best, J. W. & Kahn, J. V. (2006). *Research in education* (9th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education Inc.
- Che, S. M. (2007). Technical and vocational education in Cameroon and critical avenues for development. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 2(4), 333-345.
- Choudaha, R. & Chang, L. (2012). Trends in international student mobility. *World Education Services*. Retrieved from <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/research-trends-international-student-mobility-education-2012-en.pdf>
- Clark, C. (2002). Effective multicultural curriculum transformation across disciplines. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 4(3), 37- 46.
- Cresswell, J.W. & Plano Clark, V.L. (2007) *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- De Vita, G. & Case, P. (2003). Rethinking the internationalization agenda in UK higher education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 27(4), 383-398.
- Falmer, H. E. (1940). The revival of classical learning as the most potent in Negro progress. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 9(4), 591-594.
- Gordon, H. R. D. (2003). *The history and growth of vocational education America* (2nd ed.). Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- GoStudyUK. (nd). *Latin American and Caribbean students in the UK*. Retrieved from http://www.gostudyuk.com/life.jsp?id=LIFE_LATAMER_GENERAL
- Gray, K.C. & Herr, E. L. (1998). *Workforce education: The basics*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Green, M. F. (2002). Joining the world: The challenge of internationalizing undergraduate education. *Change*, 34(3), 1-12.
- Institute of International Education (2012). *Open Doors 2011: International student enrollment increased by 5 percent in 2010/11*, last modified 2012 <http://www.iie.org/Who-We-Are/News-and-Events/Press-Center/Press-Releases/2011/2011-11-14-Open-Doors-International-Students>
- Johnson, R. B. & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher*, 33(7), 14-26.

- Joseph, E. (2013). *The regional strategy for workforce development and economic competitiveness. CANTA and National Training Agency*. Retrieved from <http://www.ivetatt.com/Portals/0/Images/pdf/Plenary%203%20%20Presentation%201%20Elphege%20Joseph%20NTA.pdf>
- Li, L.C. (1992). The strategic design of cross-cultural training programmes. *The Journal of Management Development*, 11(7), 22-29.
- Lindlof, T. R. & Taylor, B. C. (2002). *Qualitative communication research methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- McLaren, P. (2003). *Life in schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education*. (4th ed.). New York: Longman.
- Mehra, B. & Bishop, A. (2007). Cross-Cultural perspectives of international doctoral students: Two-Way learning in library and information science education. *International Journal of Progressive Education*, 3(1), 1-33.
- Mestenhauer, J. A. & Ellingboe, B. J. (1998). *Reforming the higher education curriculum: Internationalizing the campus*. Phoenix, AZ: The Oryx Press.
- OECD/CERI. (2003). *Enhancing consumer protection in cross-border higher education: Key issues related to quality assurance, accreditation and recognition of qualifications*. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/education/highereducationandadultlearning/20196012.pdf>
- Piland, W. E., Piland, A. & Hess, S. (1999). Status of multicultural education in the curriculum. In G. Schuyler (Ed.), *Trends in community college curriculum: New directions for community colleges no. 108* (pp. 81-88). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Powell, M. (2001). A comparative study of TVET projects: Implementation experiences from Jamaica and The Gambia. *International Journal of Education Development*, 21(5), 1-21.
- Rescher, N. (2000). *Realistic pragmatism: An introduction to pragmatic philosophy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York.
- Schunk, D. H. (2004). *Learning theories: An educational perspective* (4th ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Selvadurai, R. (1992). Problems faced by international students in American colleges and universities. *Community Review*, 12(2), 27-32.
- Smith, D. G. & Schonfeld, N. B. (2000). The benefits of diversity: What the research tells us. *About Campus*, 5(5), 16-23.
- Stokes, J. (2003). *How to do media & cultural studies*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Stuart, J. D. (2013). *Investigating policy transfer from both sides: Case study of a technical and vocational education and training model in South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from http://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/11299/161097/1/Stuart_umn_0130E_14437.pdf
- Sum, V., McCaskey, S. J. & Kyeyune, C. (2010). A survey research of satisfaction levels of graduate students enrolled in a nationally ranked top-10 program at a mid-western university. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, 7(2), 1-17.
- US Department of Education (2006). *Reauthorization of Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act*. Retrieved June 1, 2007, from <http://www.ed.gov>
- Walker-Tileston, D. (2004). *What every teacher should know about diverse learners*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Waugh, C. K. & Ruppel, M. (2004). Citation analysis of dissertation, thesis, and research paper references in workforce education and development. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 30(4), 276-284.
- Wonacott, M. E. (2003). *History and evolution of vocational and career-technical education*. Columbus, OH: Center on Education and Training for Employment. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED482359).