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Learning & Education

**Book Review: Internationalization and Employability in
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By Robert Coelen and Cate Gribble (Editors). New York, NY:
Routledge, 2019. 262 pages, paperback.**

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Reviews

Book Review: Internationalization and Employability in Higher Education

By Robert Coelen and Cate Gribble (Editors). New York, NY: Routledge, 2019. 262 pages, paperback.

Reviewed by L. Hill, University of Leeds, United Kingdom, and A. Viragos, University of Leeds, United Kingdom

Abstract

Internationalization and Employability in Higher Education is a collection of edited chapters, partitioned into modes of non-mobile or mobile international education initiatives, that contribute to the employability of graduates. Cumulatively, the chapters draw on a variety of case studies from different countries, using key stakeholder perspectives, to demonstrate the chiefly positive outcomes of the different modes of international education experiences on students’ employability skills. The book also makes reference to how higher education institutions (HEIs) can enhance practice in particular by supporting students in identifying and understanding their internationalised employability skills, and how employers can harness these.

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3 In a world that is more interculturally connected than ever before, the main reason for
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5 management schools to internationalise their education strategy, is to prepare students to
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7 become global professionals that can serve the global society (Koris, Örténblad, & Ojala,
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9 2017). These global management professionals are required to work in multinational
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11 businesses and to support cross border expansions and mergers (Sharma & Roy, 1996). The
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13 need to prepare students to become global professionals is also encouraged by employers,
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15 global accreditation bodies including the AACSB (Akella, 2017) and government level
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17 agencies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
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19 (UNESCO, 2013), Swedish Policy Inquiries (2018) and Universities UK International
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21 (UUKI, 2017).
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29 However, according to the book reviewed, when it comes to management schools trying to
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31 equip students with the skills required to become global professionals, there is a lack of
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33 “understanding of how international education can contribute to the development of these
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35 skills” (1). This standpoint is perceived as one of the top challenges by the 907 respondents
36
37 in the recent worldwide *Internationalisation of Higher Education* survey (Marioni, 2019).
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39 Therefore, this book seeks to address this, by “investigating how, and to what extent,
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41 internationalisation in higher education impacts on employability” (2). The book seeks to
42
43 achieve this by Robert Coelen, Professor in international higher education, drawing on over
44
45 twenty years of experience in intercultural skill development, transnational education and
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47 study abroad, to co-edit the book. He is complemented by Cate Gribble, who as co-editor,
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49 utilises her experience of international students, student mobility and employability policy
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51 analysis.
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Internationalization and Employability in Higher Education comprises of four parts, with between three to seven chapters in each, that are written by leading experts including Darla Deardorff, Wendy Green, and Elspeth Jones. Taken together, the parts focus on the “various modes of internationalisation in higher education” (1). Thus, Part 1 considers mobile students who undertake a period of their degree studies in another country and Part 2 centres on students who undertake a full degree in another country. Part 3 looks at international education for all students on the national campus (otherwise known as Internationalisation at Home) and Part 4 concentrates on transnational education (TNE) via distance learning or through studying at a national branch campus of an international HEI.

Part 1 elaborates on the link between learning abroad and employability, presenting case studies from a variety of locations. Focusing on study abroad programmes where the international experience is a component of the otherwise domestically delivered degree programme, Chapter 1 sets the scene for the part by providing a non-exhaustive overview of different regional and national learning abroad initiatives and policies. Each of the following chapters present an empirical study from a different national context, namely Australia, Finland, USA, Ethiopia, Japan, and Italy. All chapters consistently report beneficial employability-related outcomes from the graduates’ perspective, with a more mixed view from the employers’ perspective. As an example, Chapter 2 reports a tendency of Australian employers to underestimate the value of international experience. This is in line with the key theme of the part, that points out the importance of recognising and articulating the benefits and making the “hidden competences” (Chapter 3) developed through learning abroad visible and relevant for future employment. The need for this is clearly demonstrated in Chapter 4, which discusses how the University of Minnesota’s curriculum integration strategy improved the career readiness of students through in-depth competency development while abroad, and

then helped them to effectively transfer this to the context of the workplace. Chapter 7 presents a practical method to assessing and understanding the value of international experiences using game-based analytics, approaching employability via a behavioural, and international experience from a cognitive perspective.

Much of Part 2 considers the employment of international graduates in either the country that they have studied (e.g. Canada and New Zealand) or their national country, and the benefits and skills that they can bring either to the workplace or the economy. Chapter 8 and 9 explore the disjoint between either employer requirements or the expectations of international graduates. Given that most international students are from Asian countries (OECD, 2019), it seems appropriate that Chapter 9 focuses on Chinese students and the push factors in terms of why so many Chinese students study overseas and the realities that they face after graduation. Though valuable in terms of raising awareness on the balance of home graduates going abroad, international students settling in New Zealand and how data informs government education strategy, Chapter 10 could be more focused on the impact on HEIs.

The four chapters in Part 3 focus on the link between TNE and employability. Chapter 11 provides an up-to-date overview of the TNE landscape. TNE has automatic benefits assumed, but graduates face complex issues when entering the local labour market, such as being viewed as ‘second best option’ compared to students who studied overseas. Chapter 12 describes a study of an Australian HEI operating in Vietnam and building on local external stakeholders’ views, highlighting the importance of work integrated learning through enabling graduates to gain local knowledge that complements the mainly international curricula, and creating a positive image of TNE students with local employers. Similarly, Chapter 14 presents a case study of an Australian HEI in Malaysia. Chapter 13 centres on the

implementation of an American training model at a Vietnamese HEI and found that the initiative positively contributed to the students' development of personal adaptability, career identity, human and social capital. However, understanding of TNE is still in its infancy, and more research is needed on the nature and benefits of this type of international education.

Part 4 focuses on Internationalisation at Home i.e. predominantly formal curriculum initiatives that develop students intercultural and international skills, which management schools are keen to pursue (Clifford & Montgomery, 2015; Green & Whitsed, 2015). An example of this is discussed in Chapter 15 which focuses on Collaborative Online International Learning, that entails modules being linked to those in HEIs in other countries. There is an emphasis on students getting to know one another and the technology, then working on international projects via synchronous and asynchronous learning. In Chapter 16, the obstacles and "Process Model of internationalising learning outcomes" (208) is examined, as a means of developing students' employability skills through pedagogic practice. Both Chapter 16 and 17 identify the need to support academics in overcoming the obstacles that they face in designing and implementing experiential learning activities that develop students intercultural and international skills. The latter also identifies commonalities on the approaches that HEIs use in instilling these skills in students.

Internationalization and Employability in Higher Education has many strengths. For example, the book conveys a consistent message and points out the overall positive outcomes of different modes of international learning experiences in terms of students' personal growth. Case studies in each of the chapters serve as useful exemplars as they focus on a variety of different countries and stakeholders e.g. students, career consultants, HR professionals. With regards to employers, the book clearly acknowledges the need for their

involvement in understanding and utilising the benefits of internationalised learning, and HEIs amongst others, should help them in achieving this. There is a consensus that support needs to be given to draw out and understand how the skills acquired through internationalised learning can be translated to a workplace setting. Given its global reach, it makes sense that predominantly chapters comprise of empirical case studies supported by national and international statistics.

There are some minor concerns with this book, such as that the discussions presented in some of the chapters are less valid as they use small sample sizes, secondary data or no evidence base at all. At times there is a lack of representativeness as some parts only focus on native English-speaking or Asian countries. There is also some repetition and overlap between content in chapters, making some chapters obsolete. Moreover, there are occasions where the information conveyed digresses from the chapter topic or the terminology used is inconsistent.

The combined topic of internationalisation and employability is timely and relevant. The world of work is rapidly changing, and to succeed, graduates must keep up with new demands and increasing competition. With globalisation and the advancement of technology, organisations are becoming ever more diverse, and value employees who possess international and intercultural awareness, and can navigate cultural differences. Organisations are no longer able to offer a 'job for life', and need a workforce that is flexible, resilient, and willing to adapt. Therefore, students stand to benefit from the personal growth and the development of these employability related competences through international education and work experience. To successfully tackle worldwide challenges such as climate change, it is important for graduates to achieve a 'global citizen' mind-set through internationalisation.

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3 However, there is an urgent need to promote this key message to a wider audience including
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6 HEIs, governments, employers, and prospective students. Moreover, a better understanding
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8 is needed on how to effectively articulate the relevance of international experiences to the
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10 context of the workplace.
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