

The Formal and informal curriculum: Competition or complementarity

Raymond Hibbins

Griffith University, Queensland, Australia

r.hibbins@griffith.edu.au

Concurrent with the growth of diversity in student populations and academic staff in higher education (HE) we have seen the emergence of websites devoted to academic content, community outreach programmes, co-creation and service learning, networking and mentoring opportunities, private research consultancies by academics, work-based and work-integrated learning, internships, external research consultants investigating aspects of HE institutions, and accreditation. Such developments have witnessed what looks like the encroachment of outside bodies on the traditional business of HE institutions as well as questions about quality and standards. This 'competition' raises the question: What is the place of the formal curriculum in HE in the lives of students? This paper addresses the emergence and significant growth of a programme in the informal curriculum in a multi-campus Australian university. The programme which commenced in 2009 had 4614 participants in 2012 consisting of domestic and international students. This interaction between local and international students is facilitated by hosting a series of cultural, social and sporting programmes and events. The programme enhances language proficiency of both groups and provides rich social and cultural experiences. This programme developed from a language enhancement strategy - part of the formal curriculum in the university raises the important question of the relationship between the formal and informal curriculum in the HE space. A further issue which is an extension of the former is if there is a potential or actual emergence of a 'third space' in HE and what the implications of that might be for academic identities.