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Internationalisation in Higher Education: the intentions were good, but where do we take it from here?

Internationalisation is a fast moving field of research in the Higher Education (HE) arena. The term 'internationalisation' first became embedded in the lexicon of HE policy and strategy shortly after the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) proposed that HE should integrate, 'an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution' (OECD, 1999, p.16). Whilst this recommendation has far reaching interpretations, the most immediate and prevalent practice was to increase the recruitment of international students to UK institutions (Hazelkorn, 2008). The recruitment of international students is matched with other equally economically driven activities such as: Transnational Education (TNE) whereby programmes developed and accredited in one country are delivered in other institutions across the globe; and International Branch Campuses (IBCs) which enable Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to extend their geographical reach by running research and taught programmes from physical campuses dotted across various continents. Due to the importance of income generation in HE, these facets of internationalisation are well-researched and supported by a growing body of literature largely focusing on ways of maximising international student recruitment and developing working partnerships with international partners (Ayoubi & Massoud, 2007; Bennell & Pearce, 2003; Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). However there is an alternative voice emerging of a more socio-liberal stance, which challenges this dominant neo-liberal model and seeks to increase the focus on the intercultural dimension of teaching and learning (Magne, 2015). It is this intercultural dimension of internationalisation which will be the focus of this article.

It may be useful to start by articulating my interpretation of the distinctions between internationalisation, multinational curricula, and intercultural education. The broad tenets of internationalisation were dealt with in the introduction. The two latter terms have considerable overlap. However in its most unforgiving interpretation the multicultural curriculum can be conceived of as an attempt to contemporise curriculum content with examples from across the globe. This approach was adopted in a number of schools as early as the 1960's, with the best of intentions and a view to enhancing student awareness of different practices and perspectives, particularly where there were significant immigrant populations (Farrell, 1990). A similar approach has been adopted in some HE curricula, particularly when trying to bridge the divide for example between large cohorts of students made up of two main nationalities. Such examples often exist in business and economic degrees which attract significant numbers of Chinese nationals and local, UK citizens (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007) where attempts have been made for example to examine different management styles in the two cultures. This practice may have been applauded as a first step in developing international practice in HE in that it goes some way to waking students up to the world that exists beyond their immediate horizons. However this approach also attracts considerable criticism. This multicultural content approach as defined here, has the potential dangerous effect of confirming stereotypes (Roux, 2001) and 'othering', a term used to describe the process of concentrating on difference whilst simultaneously strengthening a sense of one's own cultural norms as correct (Moore & Hampton, 2014).

As the literature explains, this is where intercultural education aims to move beyond the multicultural approach towards a more transformative experience (Robson, 2011) whereby students are challenged to question their own cultural norms and enter into critical dialogue. Rather than focusing its attention on just the internationally mobile / or well-travelled students, this intercultural discourse considers what internationalisation means in relation to the *whole* student population. This paradigm shift away from the economic towards the pedagogic model of internationalisation is increasingly apparent in contemporary publications. The very existence of a journal entitled Intercultural Education, and special issues such as

'Exploring Internationalisation of the Curriculum to Enhance the Student Experience' (Foster & Anderson, 2015) published by the Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice (JPAAP), demonstrates a growing expertise and dialogue in this field. For example Lee (2005) examines a useful distinction between 'a multicultural curriculum and an intercultural one' (p201) whereby intercultural curricula works through dialogue *between* cultures, rather than simply trying to cover material *about* multiple cultures (emphasis my own). She goes on to defend this position by pointing out that simply recognising diversity is not enough, we must also be able to enhance communication and understanding between those diverse groups. Central to this idea is the notion that intercultural education is a 'moral cultivation' (Lee, 2005, p.204). Nussbaum (1997) calls this the 'cultivation of humanity' and both authors agree that this form of cultivation must be supported by the ability to think critically. Hence intercultural education moves away from 'othering' and information-giving towards an open and honest critical dialogue which has narrative and reasoning at its core.

So where do we go with this? We can see from OECDs original call that the intentions were good and much more far reaching than the international recruitment, TNE and IBC activities that have thus far been prevalent. However in the current economic climate and ever-diminishing sources of income available to Higher Education, one cannot blame those who govern and lead HEIs for pursuing those elements of internationalisation which drum up much needed income. So whilst as an Educational Developer I might choose to follow the intercultural education route on the basis of its pedagogic and moral merits, perhaps it is time to use the economic argument to support this fast-growing element of internationalisation. There are a number of weapons we have at our disposal, or, put in more positive terms, there are some convincing arguments, that might encourage a shift in thinking.

We know for example that employers are looking for graduates who will be competent in a global market place (Adelman, 1994; Bennett, 2002; Wall, 2007). The league tables, which include data about graduate employment drawn from the Destinations and Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) survey (HESA, 2015), also act as a motivator for universities. HEIs are aware that the more savvy fee-paying student uses the league table data as they weigh up the cost of studying for a degree against the long-term gains, career prospects and potential earnings and opportunities (Cosman-Ross & Hiatt-Michael, 2005). With this in mind the league table competition is now prompting universities to take more seriously the notion of the 'globally competent' (Hunter, White & Godbey, 2006) or 'interculturally capable' (Crosbie, 2014) student. This then requires a paradigm shift, not only in thinking and rhetoric, but also in daily embedded practice across the disciplines and institutions as a whole. The argument posited here is that intercultural education should be developed in *all* disciplines, not just the few obvious programmes such as international politics, or business and economics degrees. And this argument sits alongside the reminder that intercultural education goes beyond a multicultural peppering of the curriculum with examples that only serve to accentuate difference, towards a challenging transformative experience in which students and academics question cultural norms and engage in open and honest dialogue.

The matter of open and honest dialogue is something in itself that requires careful consideration. In the introduction to Democratic Dialogue Bubbles (2004) asks important questions about the aims of a 'socially committed classroom'. He challenges the reader to consider whether the socially committed classroom should 'create dialogue, wherever it might lead', 'challenge and change the views of dominant groups', or 'strengthen solidarity and promote transformative action on behalf of the disempowered.' (Bubbles, 2004, p.xxiii). In turn the editor and other contributors to this book grapple with these questions. Boler herself states that, 'educators must deal with messy issues that others cannot and do not want to address' (Boler, 2004, p.4) Glass (2004) points out that dialogue provides a space for 'cognitive and emotional dissidence [which] are necessary features of the critical consciousness' (p.15). However he also notes that this dissidence can feel uncomfortable, something which resonates in my experience in which I have observed academic colleagues searching for the 'right' or politically correct phrases in their attempts to discuss internationalisation and educational cultures.

This creates a tension for us in the academic field. The disciplinary context is often a 'safe zone' in which the academic has the expertise and confidence to engage students knowledgably in subjects in which they are well versed and passionate about. However confidence levels often diminish when colleagues are asked to address pedagogic approaches that sit outside their previous experience. The negotiation of intercultural dialogue requires an openness to engage in critical debate. It needs an awareness of the differences, resentments, fears, and power games, both conscious and unconscious at play (Burbles, 2004). If we are to agree with Garrison that, 'Much as some teachers think they can assure a safe space for dialogue in their classrooms . . . there are no such safe sites' (in Boler, 2004, p.95), then colleagues also need time to build trusting relationships as they prepare students to enter into the challenging realms of intercultural education. Nor should we underestimate the support academics may need to develop the dexterity and confidence to facilitate this transformative approach.

To some this might sound exciting, whereas others may view intercultural education as described in this article with some trepidation. Yet if we are to address the internationalisation agenda in the way it was originally intended, I suggest that intercultural education must be integral to our approach. It is not just economics and league tables driving the agenda, there are also voices from the domain of social justice which challenge us to become 'progressive educators', and to create space for the unheard voices to be heard (Freire, 1992). As Nussbaum tells us intercultural education is about inviting people to question their assumptions of the world and intelligently read another person's story with compassion and empathy (Nussbaum, 2002).

So whatever our motivations, if we are to mould or sculpt interculturally competent graduates there is still some work to be done. Internationalisation is still high on the agenda, so there is an opportunity to be had in shaping how it is taken forward. As a researcher in this area, my intention is to develop a framework of questions and considerations that may help to move the notion of intercultural education into mainstream dialogue. For those working in leadership or educational/academic developer roles, the next steps are: to identify the forums which can act as conduits to introduce and discuss the notion of intercultural education as part of the wider agenda; find existing examples of good practice that can be shared; and plan developmental activities that may help colleagues explore the potential of intercultural education within the curriculum and start to embed it in their practice. This at least gives us a starting point which attempts to readjust the balance between the economic and the pedagogic elements of internationalisation to make it, as it was originally intended to be, a transformative experience for the whole student population, not just the well-travelled few.

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