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and Society***

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Notes on Contributors

Wenonah Barton is Teaching Officer in the Faculty of Arts, University of Nottingham.

Tracey George has worked for the University of Nottingham since 2002. Currently based within the School of Community Health Sciences, she is a Programme Manager on the East Midlands CLAHRC (Collaborations for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care), managing four primary care based projects which were designed to address local NHS priorities.

Mona Moufahim is a Lecturer in Marketing at Nottingham University Business School (NUBS). Her ongoing research is concerned with political marketing, consumption and identity. Her broad research interests include critical marketing, political marketing, and higher education marketing.

1 Globalisation and Higher Education: neo-colonialism, emancipation and resistance

Mona Moufahim

Over the next 20 years, the phenomenon of transnational education will become an increasingly important mode of economic, educational and cultural exchange between countries. Britain is reliant on a continuing influx of overseas students who are also being courted by other nations such as the US, Australia and Singapore. With this overseas student market worth millions of pounds per annum, British universities management and national educational policy-makers, need to determine an overarching strategy for Britain's education system and its global brand.

In a BBC News Online article, Sean Coughlan (24/03/2004) states: "Instead of only providing courses and degrees within their own country, universities are increasingly looking to export their *"brand"* overseas, where there is demand of UK-endorsed university degrees" (emphasis added). The idea is that wherever there is demand –at home and overseas–, British (and other western) universities must provide degrees, create and transfer knowledge and generally, 'educate the masses'. Marketing will ensure that such demand is developed, sustained, and satisfied. The internationalisation of programmes and curricula, the encouragement of students and educators' mobility, the recruitment of overseas students, the cross-border cooperation between universities, and the *"export of their "brand" overseas"* ... are all common practices today. In the context of the globalisation of higher education (HE), and the concomitant fierce global competition, internationalisation seems to be the only way forward for universities and educational institutions in order to ensure sustainability and relevance. For the University of Nottingham, which has established campuses in China and Malaysia, the internationalisation strategy is justified by "a policy of moving from a domestic market to an overseas one, expanding scope for income generation, influence, and prestige as we mount the 'global league table'" (Tormey, 2006: 10). There seems to be an unambiguous commercial rhetoric in such a statement. The overseas 'markets' are considered in terms of what money they will bring (income generation), as zones of influence, and instrumentally, for the enhancement of the university's status.

Adopting a postcolonial stance, this essay seeks to address the apparent 'unbalanced' relationship between developing countries and more developed countries, in terms of the export of knowledge. In the

area of transnational HE, it has become evident that the 'product' being exchanged between nation-states is not simply the degree or diploma (Johnson, 2001). It is also the culture, the social role, the people and the institutional and political interests (overt or covert) of the various educational institutions and governments. This essay discusses, from a macro-level 'structural' perspective (and therefore downplaying the 'agency' of the actors involved), the commercial logic of HE, and more specifically the neoliberal ideology underlying it. Education is thus approached both as an emancipatory tool for poorer nations, *and* as an instrument that sustains inequalities in our postcolonial world. The discussion begins with the consequences of globalisation for HE.

Globalisation: a contested concept

Definitions of globalisation are numerous, and the implications of those definitions and how one conceptualises it, are far-reaching (see Rizvi, 2004; Tikly, 2004; see also extended critical discussion by Tikly, 2001). Briefly defined, globalisation is, according to Held (1999: 2), "[...] the widening, deepening, and speeding up of worldwide interconnectiveness". According to the OECD (2004: 18), "...globalisation entails the formation of worldwide markets operating in real markets in terms of financial systems, and unprecedented levels of foreign direct investment and cross border mobility of production". Definitions focusing on the financial and economic implications of globalisation are common. However, Waters (1995; in Rizvi 2004) notes that globalisation is not just an economic force, but also a cultural phenomenon that could no longer be contained within the boundaries of the nation state. Ideas, knowledge, attitudes, media and cultural commodities now spread around a 'borderless' world (Rizvi, 2004: 160). The position adopted in this essay is a critical approach that seeks to problematise common conceptualisations of globalisation as non-ideological and a-historical, i.e. a mere contemporary reality, an unstoppable force that shapes our lives (see Ohmae, 1995; Banerjee and Linstead, 2001; Halsall, 2009). While I will not reproduce here Tikly's comprehensive review of the literature on globalisation and education (as related themes), I instead provide the definition he adopted as the most comprehensive:

[Globalisation is a] *process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions –assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact- generating transcontinental or interregional flows and*

networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power" (Held et al., 1999: 16; in Tikly, 2001: 156).

Tikly (2001: 156; emphasis in the original) explains that this definition and understanding of globalisation is based on an understanding of globalisation as a set of *processes* rather than a single 'condition'. These processes involve interactions and networks within the political, economic and cultural domains as well as those of labour and migratory movements. Advances in technologies have indeed facilitated the flows of capital, people and ideas on a global level (Rizvi, 2004). For Rizvi (2004: 160) and Zeleza (2005) among others, globalisation is not simply about 'movement', 'flows' and 'interconnectedness', but needs to also be interpreted as a hegemonic project, constituted by the power of capital, neoliberal restructuring, and the so-called "free-market fundamentalism" (Zeleza, 2005: 6). In other words, globalisation has been inextricably linked to the expansion of capitalist ideologies and practices (Rizvi, 2004: 160). There is no denying in this essay that the inclusion to global trade has provided the poorest communities around the world with economic gains, prosperity, and social development. Newly industrialised countries have undoubtedly benefited from the globalisation, however, it must be acknowledged that globalisation's benefits have been unevenly distributed across and within countries (Banerjee and Linstead, 2001).

The consequences of globalisation and its capitalist agenda on education are explored in further details in the next section. As education operates within a broader cultural field (including mass media and, an increasingly globalised consumer culture, see Brookes and Waters, 1995; Hall, 1996; Kenway & Bullen, 2001; all in Rizvi, 2004: 158-159), exploring how globalisation, and more specifically cultural globalisation, has impacted upon the HE sector is important. HE is indeed concerned with the process of acquiring, sharing, and disseminating knowledge, which is itself a central tenet of globalisation.

Globalisation and higher education

While this is not exactly a new phenomena, it is nevertheless worth noting the *increased* mobility of students, professors, researchers *and* the internationalisation of curricula and programmes as consequences of globalisation (Zeleza, 2005; emphasis added). Due to the development of new information and communication technologies, and the pressures for knowledge commodification and commercialisation, "borderless" education has become a palpable reality (Zeleza, 2005:

6). The internationalisation of HE is celebrated, as it is believed to provide attractive opportunities: meeting and interacting with students, staff, and lecturers from around the world; enhancing one's educational experience; preparing oneself for an increasingly global workplace and therefore enhancing employability (see Utton, 18/01/2010). The following quote illustrates this view: "the cultural diversity of the modern university provides us with rich opportunities to learn about each other" (Hyland, et al., 2010: 3). Such learning is believed to prepare students for the global context, in a multicultural world (OECD, 2004).

As stated above, international students' mobility is not a recent phenomenon: students have been travelling overseas, dating back to early Greek scholars (Knight and Van der Wende, 2002). One in 10 students at medieval universities came from other countries (Rivza and Teichler, 2007). During the colonial period, there was a flow of students from colonised countries to the central metropolis and promising students were often provided with funding to complete their PhDs at leading European and American universities (Zezeza, 2005; Rizvi, 2008). There were particular schemes intended to develop a local elite that was sympathetic to the economic and political interests of the colonial powers (Rizvi, 2008: 158). While some graduates settled down in the West, many returned home to assume significant leadership positions, often in support of colonial interests (Rizvi, 2008: 158). Today, western institutions still attract large numbers of international students from developing countries (Zezeza, 2005). Given the continued hegemony of western educational practices and theories, Nguyen et al. (2009: 111) note that international students return home with understandings and orientations that are likely to support the maintenance and promulgation of a particular Eurocentric mode of education and ways of thinking (Nguyen et al., 2009). The largely 'uni-directional' cultural flows (also encapsulated in HE) –from 'the West' to 'the Rest' (Rizvi, 2004) – highlight the asymmetries of power that still exist in the modern world, as has been demonstrated by numerous postcolonial analyses (see e.g. Hoogvelt, 1997; Rizvi, 2004: 158-159). My argument is that, while clearly finding their origins in the colonial period, asymmetries of power and inequality between countries and regions of the world have been exacerbated by contemporary economic and cultural globalisation. This leads us to our main discussion of education as both an emancipatory tool for poorer nations and former colonies *and* as a tool of reproduction of the inequalities around the

world. As many modern education systems in the world originate from it, it is necessary first to introduce this discussion by tackling colonial education's nature and purpose.

Colonial and Neocolonial Education: purposely selective

The high stakes involved are apparent in the role education has played in sustaining the power of the coloniser, shaping the mindset of the colonised into accepting the 'superiority' of the colonisers' values, truth claims and knowledge production, and in contributing nowadays to the reproduction of a system of ideological and economic domination. Within the context of colonialism, the purpose of education was to provide the colonial administration with staff holding basic skills, dispositions and attitudes (Tikly, 2004). It inculcated a western way of thinking based on western forms of knowledge, the so-called 'colonisation of the mind' (Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, 1981; Nandy, 1997; in Tikly, 2004) or 'servitude of the mind' (Altbach, 1977).

As countries accessed their independence, one would be forgiven for believing that the newly independent nations had finally gained control over their own educational systems. However, this was not the case for a vast majority: "the colonial systems of domination continue as the former colonisers continue to economically, culturally, financially, militarily and ideologically dominate what constitutes the so-called developing world" (Chilisa, 2005: 660; in Wickens and Sandlin, 2007: 276). This new type of colonialism, or neo-colonialism, "[...] describes a situation wherein although many formerly colonised countries have gained geographical and political independence, [but where] cultural and economic independence was never really, if at all, won" (Chilisa, 2005: 660). The theme of neo-colonialism has been researched in the context of education, more specifically how education itself operates as a form of neo-colonialism (see for example Bray, 1993; Thomas, 1993; Watson, 1994; Mulenga, 2001; Milligan, 2004; Wickens and Sandlin, 2007). The propagation of such a form of colonialism has been facilitated, it is argued here, through the discourses of development and education. Indeed education is considered a key aspect of development (Tikly, 2004). Behind the apparent purpose of helping countries take charge of their own affairs, more self-interested motives can be uncovered from the aid programmes of various development agencies, especially the World Bank. For example, Nguyen et al. (2009: 111) note that the World Bank and UNESCO have placed heavy emphasis upon primary education, at the expense of other levels of education. The consequence of such approach is that local populations

are not armed with tools (such as research and innovation) which are crucial if countries are to link education to sustainable development and the conservation of cultural and educational heritage (in Nguyen et al., 2009: 111). This limited and selective help to countries in need can be understood at the macro-level of nations' allocated role in the new world system. Tikly (2004: 174) explains that discourses around education and development have the effect of rendering populations "economically useful and politically docile in relation to dominant global interests" –global interests which are essentially 'western' (see also Sardar, 1999 for a discussion of the Eurocentric nature of current development discourses). Tikly (2004) highlights how 'development', along with related terms like 'progress' and 'civilisation', has been used in western modernist thought to legitimise such disparate projects as those of liberalism, marxism, fascism and imperialism.

On a more pragmatic level, the question is whether local governments can sustain the luxury of refusing help from international bodies, or avoiding bilateral relations with more powerful western countries. The answer is probably no. An anecdote shared by a colleague of mine seems to illustrate this point well: M. –a professor in Organisation Studies, who was trained first as an engineer– used to travel the world to provide training, as part of aid programmes funded by the British Council and the World Bank, to various places in the world: e.g. Tanzania, Turkey, Egypt, El Salvador.

"In some of the work I've done for the British Council and the World Bank. And the ODA- the overseas development agency- it was clear that it was an aid project, that these were aid projects, designed to help people set up technical education. But even though it was aid, I could look at it and think: "why would they want knitting machines and this technical support? Is there much knitting goes on here?", you know what I mean? It was all kind of mismatched, but we seemed to be taking out aid that wasn't needed. People took it, they want it, they'd have it 'cos it was a resource. So you take stuff out, train people, but these machines will never be used again, because they became a kind of icons and symbols of power, and richness, that: "we got this in our school, don't let anyone touch these machines". I was always aware that this was going on and inappropriate [...]"

This is an interesting story. M. highlights both the uselessness of some of the aid and training programmes, but at the same time, shows that the recipients were keen to receive such help, regardless of the

relevance for their own context. Regardless of their material usefulness, the knitting machines became 'relics' with a quasi-sacred value: no one touches them. The machines were imbued with a symbolic value that came from an assumption of "authority of Western 'truths' over other cultural ways of knowing and understanding" (Christie, 1991; in Ryan, 2008: 674). While "Western imperialism and colonial behaviour unquestionably seek to build a world based on Western cultural ideas of reason and freedom" (Ryan, 2008: 673), there is no denying the power of this ideology, as the submissive freely accept the situation as normal and try to emulate Western practices and espouse Western values. This is highlighted in the following comment, by another colleague of mine, also a NUBS lecturer, who taught a business module in Singapore:

"What I find interesting and a bit worrying, when I was in Singapore last year, is that everybody wants to know about that stuff. So it's not army marching in and forcing them to. I suppose it is American hegemony...because they are the richest country, so everybody wants to know about how they do it".

The colonial mindset as adopted, and internalised by the 'colonised' will continue, as bluntly stated by Nguyen et al. (2009: 110), to situate them in the shadow of the West: "because their vision of educational development and standards of knowledge production are based on western epistemological schema and theories that are deeply rooted in, and informed by, colonial thought" (Wallerstein, 1996; in Nguyen et al., 2009: 110). While sending the most promising people to the West for training highlights the desirability of acquiring Western-based knowledge, it also highlights the accessibility of such knowledge by a powerful minority (politically and economically), within developing nation.

As highlighted earlier, under colonialism, education was the principal means for gaining access to public service (Bayart, 1993: 75). Secondary and HE became a privilege, and also an important resource for those in public service, to be accessed by themselves, their children, relatives and friends (Tikly, 2001: 161). In 1994, Ilon presented a convincing future scenario involving a growing gulf in educational opportunities between emerging global elites and the rest of the population. According to Ilon (1994: 99), "within this highly differentiated environment, a top tier will benefit from a private education that will make them globally competitive; a middle tier will receive a 'good' but not 'world class' education, whilst the majority, third tier, will have a local, state education that will make them

'marginally competitive for low-skill jobs'". Sixteen years later, one can observe that Ilon was not wrong. Overseas education, for example, is accessible mostly by those who can afford it (Singh et al. 2007). Findlay et al. (2006: 313; in Brooks and Waters, 2009: 109) also noted that there has always been an association between mobility for education and privilege, this relationship is even becoming stronger with overseas students education "increasingly becoming a property of the more well-off students... leaving the majority socially, financially and linguistically excluded".

Studying abroad is considered by many as a key to greater employability, better job prospects at home, and for 'global' positions. International students hope to become members of a 'global elite', comfortable at working across national boundaries and cosmopolitan in lifestyle and outlook (Mazlish and Morss, 2005; in Brooks and Waters, 2009). The emergence of this cosmopolitan global elite contributes to the spreading and reproduction of the dominant discourse of globalisation, and concomitant global capitalism. It is worth noting that this global elite comes from both the former colonies and from the more developed countries. In their analysis of the mobility of privileged UK students, Brooks and Waters (2009) have shown that British privileged groups seek to maintain their social advantage by attending highest status 'home' universities and colleges (e.g. Oxford, Cambridge), and top overseas universities (e.g. Harvard and the likes) (Brooks and Waters, 2009). Overseas education thus plays an important role in securing a privileged labour market position and opens up access to elite social networks (Brooks and Waters, 2009: 1087). For example, there is a high status attached to overseas qualifications by employers in Malaysia (Rizvi, 2010) and Hong Kong's overseas educated form an exclusive club (see Waters, 2007; Brooks and Waters, 2009).

Globalisation, as we have stressed earlier, has had uneven implications for populations in former colonies, with clear winners (indigenous elites) and losers (the masses), but also within western countries with an increasing divide between the 'haves' and 'have-nots', which were left behind in the global capitalist race. This section has illustrated the role of HE in perpetuating inequalities, both between countries and within countries, across the traditional divide of the 'North' and 'South'. The next section explores the possibility of resistance to the neoliberal and neo-colonial agenda in HE.

On the possibility to resist the neo-colonial agenda

Resistance: how?

While resistance needs to be understood from the perspective of the 'potential' neocoloniser, neocolonised countries must also shake-off the 'servitude of the mind' (Altbach, 1977), and achieve self-determination from their own strengths. Cornwell (1998) argues in relation to the African context, that whilst the state must inevitably transform itself to become more accountable to ordinary people and their needs, it is problematic to assume that this ought to happen along the lines prescribed by the West (in Tikly, 2004: 14). Rather it ought to involve "the creation of voluntary neighbourhood governments and rural grass roots movements that produce alternative institutions of decision-making, drawing on customary notions of justice, fairness and political obligation" (Tikly, 2004: 14). Cheru (2002) also calls for a form of 'democracy from below' via the work of grassroots and civil society organisations such as peasants' organisations, informal economy and self-help associations, the human rights movement, trade unions and religious organisations. Such argument involve mobilising civil society by allowing rural people to build on the 'indigenous', that is, whatever they consider important in their lives; whatever they regard as an authentic expression of themselves (Ake, 1988; in Tikly, 2004). Popular support for education by many poorer communities around the world should not also be ignored, as formal and informal education has often emerged as a result of mass community efforts, particularly in the rural areas (Tikly, 2004: 191). These community efforts are today in danger of being atomised by the continuing neo-liberal emphasis on user fees and individual entrepreneurialism (Sayed, 1999; Rose, 2002) and undermined by continued dependency on the West (Tikly, 2004: 191).

Although education has been used as tool to further the interests of global capitalist agenda, Tikly (1994) notes that it can also play an important role in providing a focus and forum for the development of resistance to the status quo (Tikly, 1994). Santos (2002) reflects on the conditions necessary for transforming education as a disciplinary technology into a potentially liberatory institution based on a view of knowledge not as a means of western control and regulation of non-western populations, but of emancipation from the new imperialism (in Tikly, 2004). Sardar (1999), for example, argues that resistance to Eurocentricism can only come from non-Western concepts and

categories. Non-Western cultures and civilisations, with their own world views, norms and values, must be granted prominence for their reconstruction to be possible (Tikly, 2004). This means that the non-West has to create a whole new body of knowledge, rediscover its lost and suppressed intellectual heritage, and shape a host of new disciplines (Tikly, 2004: 193). The task is clearly colossal, but ultimately unavoidable if former colonies want to adjust the balance of power, and assure the prosperity of their people.

One particularly interesting concept brought forward by the University of Nottingham is the notion of reciprocity. The University has been under criticism for its venture into the Malaysia and Chinese educational markets, as some have pointed at the neo-colonial flavour of the overseas campuses. However, reciprocity could be used to offset the potential effect of a neo-colonialist approach to education. This is why the university stresses its 'internationalisation' strategy, rather than a globalisation ambition: in the words of Douglas Tallack, the then PVC for Internationalisation: "The University chose 'internationalisation' rather than 'globalisation' to emphasise reciprocity, and not a soft form of colonialism" (Tallack, 2006). This reciprocity involves the development of fruitful, equal relationships between the university and its partners around the world. Tormey (2006: 10) explains that: "It follows that a global institution does not impose one view, one way of life, or form of knowledge on the rest of the world. It creates a space in which 'the rest of the world' can examine what we hold to be important and true in a safe, enjoyable and productive relationship of equals". The rhetoric sounds convincing, but how this will be operationalised in the future remains to be seen, as not tackling this important issue could potentially harm the university's image and reputation.

The Cosmopolitan teacher in China

While I discussed the institutional and macro issues linked to globalisation and HE, little consideration was given to the agency of students, lecturers, and other actors involved in the global HE system. I do nevertheless acknowledge some (limited) level of agency at the individual's level. An illustration of such acknowledgement is taken from my own experience, and I how I try to cope with some of the issues presented in this essay.

As a student, I consciously adopted an international educational strategy (for several reasons: employability, opportunity to develop cultural awareness, opportunities to live abroad on my own, to enhance aspects of my 'cosmopolitan' identity, etc..., in short for many of the reasons developed in pp. 7 and 13). I studied in the following countries: Belgium (primary and secondary education), Morocco (Business and Management BSc), and in the UK (for both the Masters and doctoral programmes of Nottingham University Business School). My lecturing career started in the Chinese campus of the University of Nottingham. In Ningbo, the outsider position I felt I was in –neither 'British', nor 'Chinese'– would have been a comfortable position where I would be able to observe and be judgmental about both, without (I thought) threatening my own identity. However, I was constructed as 'British'/'foreign'/'Middle Eastern' lecturer by the locals, and asked to teach a business module (marketing) to a largely homogeneous groups of Chinese undergraduate and postgraduate students respectively. There was also a small minority of international students (mostly from Britain, Singapore, Malaysia, Russia and India) whose identity was largely 'cosmopolitan' in that they were broadly travelled, *westernised*, and well-off. I quickly found myself mostly engaging with this cosmopolitan group of students. They were familiar with the brands and companies I used as case studies (the textbooks used were the same as the ones used at Nottingham), and in general were comfortable with my 'participative' style of teaching where debates left you with more unanswered questions than you started with. Engaging the rest of the class proved difficult. The easiest, more comfortable and unreflexive option would have been to blame Chinese students for being too shy to speak in public, to blame it on the local culture, with its concept of face and consensus, or simply assume that their years of Chinese education moulded them into passive recipients.

Perhaps, due to my own experience as an international student – recalling the difficult first months studying at Nottingham, the agonising hours of reading impossibly dry and inaccessible journal papers, to reduce the 'cultural' gap between myself and the UK 'home' students, I decided to reach out to my audience. I started with the content of my courses, but finding articles, textbooks accessible in English from Asian/Chinese sources proved a real challenge. Eventually, I settled on Asian perspectives on traditional (western) theories; and used Asian/Chinese case studies as well as European ones. I also asked for student participation in providing their own examples and case studies. I also encouraged them to consider the validity and relevance of the theories covered in class within the

specificities of the local Chinese/Asian context –an approach that I still use here at Nottingham University Business School, UK. While my style of teaching remained essentially the same, encouraging participation and critical thinking, I also recognised the importance of not singling out students, by allowing them to work in groups, and provide group answers. This was relatively successful, as most Chinese students felt more confident in sharing their thoughts in a group, and thereby developed critical analytical tools (although some resisted, as they still felt more comfortable with the 'black and white' answers). I was still operating within the constraints of my institution, and its particular discourse of education (which privileged western methods, thought, and teaching delivery), but I made conscious efforts to resist what I saw sometimes to be unsettling manifestations of a superiority mentality, e.g. western education models are assumed to be better than Chinese education models; the typical 'expatriate' behaviour which limits interactions with indigenous population and culture.

I enjoyed the cultural learning and rich interactions within and outside the classroom from which I believe we are all transformed positively. Incidentally, M. also mentioned the enjoyment he took away from his experience, from the development of friendships with his local students, the travelling and cultural immersion in the countries he visited, regardless of the most unsettling aspects of his job. Ryan (2008: 682) suggests: "to avoid neo-colonial practices, we need to acknowledge the nature of the ontological frameworks within which we operate. We need to acknowledge when our taken for granted assumptions about the world are being challenged. We need to understand the multiple realities of our world and to use these understandings to reach out beyond familiarity and comfort of our own worldview". Which is perhaps what both Mike and I were trying to acknowledge in the positive outcomes we saw from our work in other cultures.

Conclusion

Currently politically independent people in the developing world continue to be bound, though perhaps voluntarily and through necessity, to powerful western nations (Wickens and Sandlin, 2007: 276). Earlier in the essay, I have indicated how education is used as a tool to promote such dependence by the reproduction of certain practices, the promotion of Western neoliberal values, and the creation

of global elites whose loyalty lies mainly with their own powerful global networks, and ultimately with global capitalism.

The potential for resistance seems fairly limited, as many developing nations have willingly adopted the western model as the only way forward in their development effort. We have seen that the development and education discourse are also tightly linked to a particular neoliberal worldview. The potential for development is also fairly limited, as it places nations in an ongoing relationship of dependence on more powerful nations. The economy (in effect directed from outside) shapes public policy, and this has a direct impact on education. Education, as it is defined today, still contributes to the reproduction of the relationships of domination and submission, started during the colonial period, and sustained through the dictatorship of the free (global) market.

Ideally, while the impulse to resist should come from the 'neocolonised' countries themselves, in a bid to self-determination, self-empowerment and pride, the role of 'potential' neocolonisers should not be overlooked. In this perspective, Simon Tormey, the Director of the Centre for Social and Global Justice at the University of Nottingham, seems to be asking the appropriate questions:

According to DfES, ensuring that key concepts such as global citizenship, social justice, sustainable development, diversity, conflict resolution and human rights are embedded in all our curricula. Introducing these concepts in a complex, uncertain and unequal 'global' society raises ethical and pedagogical questions that the University, as socially responsible institution, has a duty to address. The ethical aspect involves an examination of our position and our assumptions and relationships with other countries. This includes unpacking issues that we normally take for granted and asking questions like: Whose knowledge is valued in our work? What makes this knowledge necessary? How did it come to be regarded as such? Who decides the standards? Becoming global equates to being open to the thought that there are other ways of doing things, other ways of seeing things and other ways of being in the world that have value. (Tormey, 2006).

This quotation raises interesting issues. There is clearly a need for an open and widespread recognition of the issues raised in this essay. For example, the University of Nottingham is described here as a "*socially responsible institution*". In the business world, corporations are being held accountable for their actions and put under tremendous pressure to be socially responsible, i.e. to reflect and act upon the consequences

of their actions on the physical and social environment. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) became a signal that companies were caring, if not about their environment, at least about how they were perceived by their stakeholders and civil society. HE should be no exception: the next step should be the development of a Social and Educational Responsibility code of conduct for internationalising HE institutions. Such an ethical framework is essential because, in addition to forging social values and citizenship, education is also a critical social process and practice for promoting development (Singh, 2002). A critical approach, as advocated by Tormey (2006), which seeks to question one's assumptions regarding truth, ontologies and epistemologies, values and beliefs, would appear to be a valuable first step in the right direction.

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2 Lost in translation? Examining the role of universities in facilitating intercultural learning for home and international students

Wenonah Barton

Since the launch of the first Initiative for International Education (PMI) in 1999 by the former Prime Minister Tony Blair, the international student market has grown rapidly in the UK. In 1998/9, there were 219,285 overseas students studying in UK HE institutions, equivalent to 11.9% of the total HE student population (HESA 2000). Newly released statistics show that for 2008/9, that figure had grown to 368,970, equating to just over 40% growth in ten years. And in just one year from 2007/8 to 2008/9, the rate of increase of students from non-EU countries was almost three times that of the rate of increase of UK domicile students (HESA 2010).

A primary aim of the first PMI was to increase international student numbers 'in recognition of their importance in fostering international relations and bringing long-term political and economic benefits to the UK' (British Council 2010a). As part of this political and economic agenda for internationalisation, the key focus seems to have been on the marketing of UK education, 'to provide a competitive edge for the UK within an increasingly crowded market place' (ibid). This was in recognition of the fact that more and more countries were beginning to seek to attract international students, and UK institutions were facing increased pressures in recruitment from global competitors.

As competition has continued however, government emphasis has shifted in PMI2 (launched in 2006) to articulate much more concern with educational 'quality' and 'value' – conveniently vague and ill-defined terms but which are encapsulated in the government's desire to provide a 'positive student experience' for international students (British Council 2010b). At the same time, the government's internationalisation agenda articulates the need for diversifying the international market in terms of 'building relationships with people from around the world and learning about each others' cultures' (ibid). Is this merely convenient rhetoric or is there a growing genuine recognition of the value of the presence of international students within HE institutions?

At a time of recession in the UK, some HE Institutions at least will be looking more and more to the international market for part of its

income stream. David Greenaway, Professor of Economics and Vice-Chancellor of Nottingham University, wrote recently in an article for the Times Higher Education (Greenaway 2010):

Increased recruitment of international students will not be the solution for all UK universities, but it will be part of the answer for some. The market for international students will continue to grow, and Britain remains well placed to benefit from the continued globalisation of higher education. Its reputation for quality and the advantages offered by our native language remain key assets. However, this market will become more competitive as new providers enter and the quality of higher education in some of the large source countries improves.

It would seem clear that if UK institutions are going to compete effectively and see growth in international student numbers, especially in view of the new, more restrictive visa system, it is in universities' interests to seek to deliver the best quality learning experiences possible. Indeed it is with this in mind that the UK HE International Unit (2010) has put together its latest research report, focusing on key areas of student satisfaction, including orientation, culture and social integration, accommodation and living, and teaching and learning.

However, I will argue that rather than simply responding out of a market-driven necessity, universities have a responsibility to facilitate a positive intercultural learning experience, and as such, not only to focus on international students but to concentrate equally on promoting intercultural learning among home students. In using the term 'intercultural learning', I will adopt the definition cited by Gill (2007:168) that 'includes both the experience of encountering two or more different cultures and the learning that occurs through such an encounter'.

The purpose and role of Universities

Universities such as Nottingham welcome thousands of overseas students onto their courses each year in exchange for significant fee income. In 2009/10, almost 8500 EU or other international students were registered at the Nottingham campus of Nottingham University, representing over a quarter of the University's total student population. Nottingham University also prides itself on its pioneering work to establish international campuses in China and Malaysia and promotes student mobility between campuses, inviting students to Nottingham for up to two years of study on some courses.

Such investment in internationalisation must surely bring an ethical responsibility on the part of Universities to seek to provide a positive learning experience for these students. Certainly, internationalisation as positively defined by Knight and de Wit (1995), should aim to enable students and staff to 'understand, appreciate and articulate the reality of interdependence among nations (environmental, economic, cultural and social)' and to prepare them for living and working in an 'international and intercultural context' (p.13). In other words, in a globalised world, universities should see it as one of their central goals to educate and prepare both home and overseas domicile students for living as global citizens (UKCOSA 2004), and, as part of that, to develop students' capability for a 'narrative imagination' (Nussbaum 2006, cited in Booth, McLean and Walker 2009:931).

Again, to use the University of Nottingham as an example, its current Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (2009) states as one of its principles, that 'The University provides an international education to students from around the world and gives all students a wealth of opportunities to gain from different cultures and different perspectives.' As such, 'the curriculum is designed to be relevant and accessible to students from all parts of the world [..and] incorporates intercultural perspectives as appropriate' (University of Nottingham 2009). Certainly, on paper at least, it would seem that institutions like Nottingham are beginning to embrace a more transformative approach to internationalisation, whereby 'the "international richness" [which international] students represent does, and should, affect the nature of the educational experiences of all in the university' (Tian and Lowe 2009:662).

Whilst such principles of internationalisation may be encapsulated in broad theoretical University statements of providing students with the intercultural experience and competencies needed for living and working with individuals from other cultures, yet the question remains of how to realise such aspirations. Research has argued that simply the presence of international students on campus and in classes neither brings about the natural development of intercultural interaction between students (De Vita 2005), nor does it 'internationalise the curriculum or the experiences of domestic students' (Leask 2005:128), and that home students are largely apathetic towards interacting with international students (Ward 2001, Brown 2009). Reasons for this will

be explored below, before exploring what a proactive approach to promoting effective intercultural learning might be.

Perspective of home students

I would agree with Dunne (2009) that, as part of the research and discussion of intercultural relations and learning, it would seem self-evident to examine the influence and perspective of the dominant host culture. Yet to date, there has been relatively little research to explore the attitudes and experiences of home students in relation to contact and interaction with international students. One often-cited study by Volet and Ang (1998) explored both Australian and international students' views on working in culturally mixed groups for assessments, and provided evidence that home (Australian) students prefer to work in mono-ethnic groups largely due to language difficulties and stereotyping.

The issue of language is complex. Volet and Ang provide evidence of home students experiencing problems understanding international students and vice-versa. One student commented, 'I think the language is a difficulty. They don't speak English in their groups. They don't come to mix with us so we don't go to mix with them.' (1998:12). Whilst this student identified a reluctance to initiate contact as a response to perceived disinterest or inability to interact on the part of the international students, in fact, as I shall outline later, the lack of mixing by internationals is often due to reasons other than simply language difficulties. Where there *are* perceived language barriers to effective communication, these perceptions can sometimes be accurate. Yet, at other times, it is indifference, anxiety or lack of effort on the part of home students to engage (Bridges 2009). Indeed, some students acknowledge that their stereotyped ideas of international students struggling to communicate and being quiet in group work have been corrected when the students are actually made to work together (Volet and Ang 1998, Bridges 2009).

Such misconceptions of the issues facing internationals and a reticence to initiate contact are just two of the barriers to home students' effective interaction with international students. One other barrier is ethnocentricity. In relation to stereotypes, the authors cite an example of a home student expecting the international students to adapt to their way of thinking, and conclude that 'Australian students with such ethnocentric views are likely to avoid teaming up with international students for group assignments' (Volet and Ang 1998:15). Further

evidence of racist and ethnocentric views and reactions by the host culture is given in the following section on international student issues. Whilst the Volet and Ang study focused on the Australian home student context, I would suggest that these findings can be applied more widely. Similar issues relating to home students' avoidance of contact with international students are evident from research undertaken in Germany (Otten 2003), as well as from a smaller-scale study undertaken in Ireland (Dunne 2009) and a comparative study in post-1992 universities (Peacock and Harrison 2009). These latter two studies identified further key factors influencing intercultural relations exclusively from the perspective of home students. One such factor was academic work ethic and participation in university life. Home students perceived that international students were much more highly focused on their studies (influenced in part at least by financial and family pressures) compared to their own priority of the social side of university life, which had an impact on how and where students chose to spend their time, and international students were reported as being rarely visible in pubs, or at university society social engagements or other activities involving alcohol. Juxtaposed with this was a perception of international students' superiority, both academically and in terms of occupying 'a higher moral ground' (e.g. in relation to alcohol consumption or how students spent their time) (Dunne 2009:227) such that home students felt judged in these areas and therefore avoided contact or honest dialogue with internationals.

Other reasons for students to stay within their own cultural peer group were perceived cultural proximity, ease of communication and feelings of security (Dunne 2009, Peacock and Harrison 2009). From the early days of forming friendships, home students reported the importance of an 'informal referral system' whereby students became friends with their friends' friends, thereby typically limiting the inclusion of international students in those peer groups (Dunne 2009). Students also emphasised the importance of humour and slang in forming friendships, strongly culture-based aspects of language which are difficult to access and therefore create barriers for newly arrived international students.

In contrast with the security felt from co-national friendships, many students also articulated feelings of anxiety or threat with regard to contact with internationals. Anxieties arose from perceived peer pressure not to introduce international students to their friendship

group, and fear of being ridiculed if they did. Students were also worried about creating misunderstandings, being perceived as racist, or unintentionally offending or embarrassing internationals. Threats arose from large mono-ethnic groupings which were viewed as 'cliquey' and, similarly to the Volet and Ang study (1998), from the fear of losing marks in multicultural assessed group work. All of these fears arise from perceived cultural differences, and for these reasons and others, in particular language barriers, students felt that contact with internationals was more demanding and less rewarding, and therefore did not pursue initial contact further. On the other hand, those students in the Volet and Ang study (1998) who were forced to work in a culturally mixed group came to realise that culture was no longer such a significant factor and that differences and similarities occurred on an individual level and were common across cultures. As one home student commented, 'It doesn't matter which country a group member is from, it is more the person that matters.'

With regard to language barriers - perceived as a major issue preventing intercultural relations - data from both Dunne and Peacock and Harrison studies indicated that students felt the need for 'mindfulness' (Peacock and Harrison 2009) i.e. to consciously have to alter their style of communication and topics of conversation. As a result, students either gave up due to the effort involved, or were dissatisfied with their interaction even to the point of feeling that their identity was compromised in that they were not able to be their genuine selves but a modified and superficial version of themselves - even though they were using their native English language. How much more could this be argued to be the case for those international students who are having to communicate in their second or third language - and yet there seems little ability or desire on the part of home students for 'narrative imagination' at this point.

Findings from the questionnaire used in the International Student Experience Report (UNITE 2006) have been more positive in terms of home students' perceived value of contact with international students, although almost half of the home student respondents lacked international friends and said that they found it hard to get to know international students. A high proportion of home students felt that meeting students from other cultures had been beneficial for their student experience, yet less than a quarter of students 'expected to be equipped with an international perspective from their time at university' and even fewer saw the benefits to their future career. Overall, these data present a mixed picture of the attitudes of home

students towards intercultural contact and learning, in particular with regard to their future working lives.

Set against these findings is a study on mixed nationality group work undertaken by Montgomery (2009) in a post-1992 British university, ten years following the research by Volet and Ang (1998). Montgomery found that home students perceived such cross-cultural group work as an enjoyable opportunity to interact with other cultures and a normative part of their learning experience 'that was potentially preparing them for work in international contexts' (2009:268). Students saw the benefit of working together cross-culturally for gaining different cultural perspectives and acquiring valuable transferable skills, although, significantly, the disciplines sampled were international in outlook and presented opportunities for placement abroad and for graduate positions in large multi-national companies. Students expressed positive views about the language fluency of the international students and there was evidence of intercultural interaction occurring informally, beyond the classroom.

In as much as this evidence of intercultural learning and competence is encouraging, I would argue that the particular contexts in which the research took place and the students' previous experience had a significant impact on the findings. Two of the three modules chosen for the research adopted Assessment for Learning (AfL) approaches, which emphasise collaborative learning and peer communities and use 'low stakes' assessment tasks designed to incorporate the skills and experiences of the group, not simply the end product. At the same time, many of the students in the Montgomery study had prior intercultural knowledge and experience - either from working in similar mixed nationality groups for coursework previously, through having mixed-nationality parents and or being multilingual, from living abroad, or from learning a language at university in order to go on placement abroad.

For these reasons, as well as the lack of comparison in findings with an 'old' University, I would suggest that the findings cannot be indicative of a wider UK picture. Rather, they illustrate what might be achievable for students already on an intercultural learning trajectory, or for modules or courses which are more obviously intercultural in nature or more conducive to an AfL approach.

Interestingly, even this study was not all positive. Negative views were expressed about Chinese students - who were perceived as a cultural entity, not as individuals, unlike students of other nationalities - and their lack of English language ability and/or participation in classes. Perhaps this is because the group-work approach is so unfamiliar in Chinese students' 'cultural script for learning' (Welikala and Watkins 2008) or because Chinese students are the largest cultural grouping in UK campuses and, as Peacock and Harrison observe (2009:492), 'a critical mass of international students tips the balance of perception and interaction from positive to negative' with a large number from one nationality grouping together to create 'a heightened sense of threat and competition'.

Issues for international students

In contrast with the relatively small amount of data on the perspective of home students, extensive research has been carried out regarding international students' intercultural interaction and learning experiences. Overall, evidence indicates that international students arrive with the expectation of interacting and establishing friendships with host students (Mullins, Quintrell and Hancock 1995, Ward 2001, Brown 2009). Studies suggest that such friendships provide psychological benefits - positive mood, increased self esteem, lower stress levels - and social and academic benefits, including cultural awareness, increased language confidence and ability, academic adaptation and satisfaction (Ward 2001, Brown 2009). However, real or apparent disinterest on the part of host students to engage with internationals for reasons already explored has been identified as a key factor in reinforcing relations with co-nationals and other international students (Ward 2001, UKCOSA 2004, Gill 2007, Brown 2009, Tian and Lowe 2009). For certain students, such withdrawal into intracultural groupings has been the result of encountering prejudice, racism or even abuse from the host culture (Mullins et al 1995, UKCOSA 2004, Brown 2009, Tian and Lowe 2009).

Other potential barriers to integration are accommodation arrangements (where internationals by choice or under institutional direction live in proximity to each other rather than to home students, or struggle with anti-social behaviour and noise of home students), and the English drinking and clubbing culture (UKCOSA 2004, Spencer-Oatey and Xiong 2006, Bridges 2009). Such issues result in students lacking a sense of belonging, often feeling lonely and 'unhappy with their social life' (Gu, Schweisfurth and Day 2009:11).

Set against this, one recent study (Montgomery and McDowell 2009), involving seven students who were already established in their studies, argues that contact with home students on an academic, social and emotional level is unnecessary for internationals to succeed and benefit from their studies abroad. Instead, the formation of an international community of practice provides them with the requisite academic and emotional support as well as 'skills and competences that could prepare them for life and work in a global community' (p. 456). However, the small-scale nature of the data set and choice of target students raise questions regarding the general applicability of the arguments. No consideration is given, for example, to the intercultural competence of students within large mono-ethnic groupings on a particular course or campus (e.g. students from an institution's overseas branch campuses). Moreover, whilst the general principle of the importance of relationships with other international students is not new and cannot be disputed, the premise for this particular piece of research would appear, at least, to be a desire to counter the 'tacit implication that students come to the United Kingdom to rectify some aspect of a deficit that they have as a result of being from another culture' (p. 456). However, I would make two counter-arguments. First, the desire for, and by, students to learn about the host culture (including academic culture) of any country does not necessarily indicate any perceived or actual deficit on the part of the international student but a recognised benefit for students to broaden their global perspective and learn to value cultural 'otherness'. Second (and this is conceded by the authors), international students have a valuable role to play in helping home students to gain greater awareness and understanding of their own and other cultural perspectives and approaches, and this can only happen if there is meaningful contact with the home students.

Finally, in examining effective and positive intercultural learning, one also needs to consider the important question of intercultural adaptation. Students' experience of culture shock includes the differences between the host's teaching and learning environment and their own 'cultural script for learning' (Welikala and Watkins 2008). Studies show that students experience shock in relation to reading, speaking and writing activities (related, for example, to issues of criticality, developing arguments, referencing), as well as in interacting with home students, participating in small group discussions, and understanding the role and expectations of lecturers (Mullins et al 1995, Gill 2007, Welikala and Watkins 2008, Gu, Schweisfurth and Day

2009). The emotional dimension of learning in the new academic culture is clearly evident, for example in students' embarrassment over their perceived language or academic inabilities to answer questions in class, lack of confidence in speaking in class, and the stress and anxiety felt through their lack of understanding of lecturers' expectations (Gu, Schweisfurth and Day 2009). The latter is considered by students to be alleviated by active support from academic staff in terms of constructive feedback, empathy with the students' experience, and clear instructions and guidance for tasks and learning activities (Gill 2007). At the same time, some students reported encountering negative attitudes among staff towards them due to the perceived extra demands of time and effort of teaching international students (Gill 2007). With regard to small group discussions, international students often feel disempowered by their lack of language fluency and therefore choose or are forced to remain silent because of dominant home student participation (Welikala and Watkins 2008, Bridges 2009). Where internationals do attempt to participate, their contributions are often ignored by the home students (Mullins et al 1995, Bridges 2009). In this way, Mullins et al identify the need for 'a level of trust between [home and international] students before the tutorial becomes a worthwhile learning experience' (1995:218).

Positive ways to promote intercultural learning

From the attitudes, perspectives and barriers that have been presented of both home and international students, it would seem clear that the majority of students are unlikely to take the initiative, or succeed, in building intercultural relations themselves. When students were forced to participate in culturally mixed groups for an assignment (Volet and Ang 1998), despite acknowledging that their perceptions of each other had changed by being in such groups, the students showed no indication of wanting to take deliberate steps to work in such intercultural groups in the future. This is just one example of where intercultural contact *per se* does not enhance the intercultural competence of students (Otten 2003). Home students, in particular, need support and input in order to grasp the benefit of intercultural interaction and to overcome their issues of anxiety, perceived language and cultural barriers and questions of identity. Therefore I would agree with research which argues that in order for significant, positive intercultural learning to take place for both groups of students, intercultural contact needs to be 'transformed into a personally relevant learning experience' (Otten 2003:15) and as such, needs to be

formally planned and designed as part of a programme of study (Volet and Ang 1998, Ryan and Hellmundt 2005).

Such a proactive approach rests in large measure with academics, as it involves integrating intercultural learning into curricula, assessment and other teaching and learning strategies. However, a deficit model of international students as often reported among academics (Ryan and Carroll 2005, Gill 2007, Goode 2007) means that academics themselves may need to be convinced of the value and significance of developing the intercultural competences of students through changes to their teaching. Those that already recognise its importance will likewise benefit from training in cultural awareness issues and from support in developing effective ways of building intercultural contact and competence into the learning environment. As such, any institutional strategy for promoting intercultural learning should take seriously the responsibility for the professional development and training of academic staff in this area.

There are various teaching and learning strategies that can be adopted to facilitate intercultural learning. One strategy that can be employed from the outset is for academics to be explicit about their academic culture (Carroll 2005, Welikala and Watkins 2008) to address issues of academic shock. Much of the anecdotal 'deficit view' of internationals (e.g. remaining silent in class, plagiarising, being demanding in terms of time and support, writing over-length work which spends too long reaching the main arguments) arises from international students trying to apply their own 'cultural script for learning' in a different learning context (Welikala and Watkins 2008). It is argued that staff first need to become aware of their own academic culture in key areas of teaching and learning methods, assessment, teacher-student relationships and academic reading and writing. They should then give *reasons* for the cultural learning approaches that are being endorsed (rather than simply presenting them as rules) so that students perceive a choice of whether and to what extent they adopt such conventions in order to succeed in the new environment (Carroll 2005, Gu and Schweisfurth 2006, Welikala and Watkins 2008). Such an explicit approach will be particularly valuable for those studying in the UK for a short time, for example Masters or exchange students, as it will save them valuable time and reduce anxiety and stress, in trying to work out the appropriate academic conventions for themselves. Interestingly, this approach will doubtless also benefit home students,

in particular 'non-traditional' learners, who similarly often find the transition to the university learning culture a challenge.

In bringing an intercultural dimension to the curriculum, a key element must surely be offering other cultural perspectives as part of the course content so that students may be equipped with the knowledge and awareness, skills and attitudes needed to understand and evaluate their discipline in the wider international context, to value cultural diversity, to be effective in their professional practice and to live as responsible, world citizens (Leask 2005). Introducing such perspectives could help to develop home students' 'narrative imaginations', which in turn could help to address issues of racism and abuse on campus.

There are various ways of introducing such international perspectives depending on the particular subject, but one key strategy, regardless of discipline, is to facilitate structured opportunities for international students and home students to engage with each other, through seminar or other group discussions and through group tasks. Studies suggest that in setting up such tasks, teachers should 'engineer' mixed home-international student groups in order to prevent mono-cultural groups forming, and that in fact host students prefer to be assigned to a specific group rather than being allowed to choose their own group, as it relieves anxieties about peer perceptions if they choose to interact with internationals (Volet and Ang 1998, Dunne 2009). For such multicultural groups to operate effectively, various key approaches have been recommended (Carroll and Ryan 2005, De Vita 2005). These include setting ground rules for participation (so that students feel 'safe' to contribute) and establishing how conflicts will be resolved, allocating specific roles so that each member is actively involved, providing any assumed background information that the internationals may not have, monitoring and engineering discussions to enable students to listen and learn from one another and setting tasks which require diverse skills and knowledge, which incorporate an exploration or comparison of culture, which can only be achieved as a group, and/or which include reflection on learning. Finally, if group work is to be assessed, staff are encouraged to include the process in some way as well as the outcome.

Universities should also consider developing or enhancing their central and departmental support systems for international students (Gu and Schweisfurth 2006). They argue that such support should be 'both socially and academically targeted' (2006:88). One such support mechanism that can address both social and academic dimensions is

the peer-mentor or 'buddy' scheme, whereby a home student is linked up with an international student, ideally prior to arrival to encourage communication and integration as early as possible (UK Higher Education International Unit 2010). In fact such schemes have the potential to enhance home as well as international students' intercultural learning, but in reality, such schemes may often not be understood or perceived to be valuable, either by home or international students, due to the misconceptions outlined earlier. I would argue that such schemes therefore need careful management and input if they are going to succeed in their intercultural aims. It is my view that home students enrolled on the scheme need training and input to address their anxieties (as mentioned previously), to consider basic cross-cultural and language issues, to explore expectations on both sides and to help them see the potential benefits for their own intercultural learning.

Anecdotal evidence from one particular scheme piloted in Nottingham with a group of Chinese students suggests that the home students perceived the international students as not needing or being interested in their friendship because they received support from their fellow Chinese students. Host students' initial excitement was replaced with disappointment, and, in at least one instance, this resulted in the home student giving up the scheme. As one student explained, 'I got the impression that my link up students weren't really that bothered in pursuing the friendship'. The question remains whether in fact this was a fair assessment of the situation, or whether there were other cultural factors affecting the student's perception of the relationship. Certainly Dunne (2009) raises this very question of whether having large mono-ethnic groups on campus stifles interaction with host students due to the availability of cultural peers.

Interestingly, a number of the home students that had volunteered for the scheme had been accepted to go on exchange, and those students have since communicated interest in re-joining the scheme on their return from abroad. This would perhaps suggest that such mentoring schemes are particularly attractive and successful for students who already have an interest or experience in forming intercultural relations. Yet whilst this will be of benefit to the international students on the scheme, in terms of achieving most home student learning benefit, I would argue that buddy schemes should be seeking as much to attract students without such propensity for intercultural contact and

providing training on intercultural communication and cross-cultural awareness to overcome fears and boost confidence in interacting with students from other cultures. At the same time, home students returning from study abroad could be invited to act as valuable catalysts and role-models for other students, to help them see the value of participating in a buddy scheme. Indeed, in setting up the aforementioned scheme, it was disappointing to observe that from approximately one hundred and fifty host students, only twenty four came forward to volunteer for a scheme requiring thirty buddies. There were perhaps several reasons for this, but it seems clear that there is much work still to be done in making intercultural interaction a normal expectation among home students.

Finally, other strategies for enhancing intercultural learning include working with the Students Union to promote social activities that are not always linked to alcohol, and publicising the opportunities and benefits to international students of volunteer work in the local community (Spencer-Oatey and Xiong 2006; UK Higher Education International Unit 2010).

Conclusions

Far from agreeing that 'integration [with home students] could be irrelevant and unnecessary' (Montgomery and McDowell 2009:465), I have argued for the value and importance of intercultural interaction and learning for both home and international students. In promoting internationalisation and seeking to attract a rapidly growing international student market, institutions carry a responsibility to address international students' expectations of interaction and friendship with home students, to facilitate their adaptation to a new learning context, to help develop home students' 'narrative imaginations' and engagement with international students, and to equip all students for living as global citizens and working in an intercultural labour market. Such a proactive approach would also be a significant step towards addressing the problem of stereotypical perceptions, prejudice and even racism on campus.

University strategies for facilitating such intercultural learning begin with investment in and training for staff to raise awareness of their own (academic) culture and intercultural issues in teaching. Adapting curriculum content and delivery is also crucial. Approaches will vary according to discipline but all courses would gain from careful consideration of the role and implementation of group discussion and

assessed group tasks. At the same time, greater consideration needs to be given to informal mechanisms for support and interaction, including Students' Union and volunteering activities, and buddy or peer-mentoring schemes. Buddy schemes have the potential to benefit home as well as international students, but require careful thought over implementation and training and preparation of home students in order to be successful.

Such developments and interventions have the potential to realise the broad policy aims of internationalisation of institutions such as Nottingham, by bringing genuine intercultural learning benefits to students and staff and creating a mutual learning environment which will enrich the student experience for all.

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3 Higher education league tables: a legitimate tool for university selection?

Tracey George

Higher Education League Tables (HELTS), also referred to as report cards or ranking systems, are defined by Roberts (2007 p.3) as "*a published set of quantitative data designed to present comparative evidence regarding the quality and/ or performance of universities.*" Simply put, HELTS numerically rank universities from best to worst using selected indicators such as research performance, and in doing so attempt to tell us something about the quality or performance of an institution.

The U.S. News published its first ranking of US colleges and universities in 1983 as an "*experiment to garner attention and sell magazines*" (Sanoff, 2007 p.9). The experiment caught on and media publications in other countries such as the UK, Canada and Germany were quick to introduce their own measures for comparing domestic universities (Merisotis, 2002). Over 20 countries now have a HELT and some countries, including the UK, have numerous competing tables (Usher, n.d). Comparisons on an international scale, or global rankings as they are often referred to, were introduced shortly after the national rankings and reflect the growing global marketplace for goods and services. Global rankings are viewed with increasing importance by government leaders and are considered representative of their country's economic strength, political power and ambition (Hazelkorn, 2009).

The published evidence suggests that the main users of HELTS are potential students who use them to decide where to go to university; employers and universities are also using them with increasing regularity (HEFCE, 2008). Employers might use HELTS to help them decide where to target their graduate recruitment campaigns (HEFCE, 2008). Universities might use HELTS (selectively!) to generate publicity; in 2007 for example the University of Nottingham proudly declared its delight in a press release at being ranked one of the top 70 global institutions by the Times Higher Education Supplement, its highest ever worldwide ranking (University of Nottingham Communications Office, 2007). Other users according to HEFCE (2008) have been identified predominately from anecdotal evidence and

include national governments, academics, potential employees, policy makers and funding bodies.

The purpose of most national HELTs is to help students, as consumers, make more informed choices about where they go to university (Cremonini, 2007); however the influence and impact of HELTs on the higher education landscape appears to be much broader than assisting student choice. So why have HELTs become so popular and influential? According to Sanoff (2007), the success of the US News rankings was associated with the rise of the consumer movement in America. Of course consumerism, (or 'marketisation') was a feature of many Western economies during the 1980s and education has increasingly become a '*marketplace commodity*' (Freeman, 2005). As potential students look to make an investment in their future and weigh up the financial costs involved in higher education, they will look to publically available information, such as HELTs, for guidance.

"[A university education is] a rare purchase and an increasingly important as well as expensive decision in one's life, students and their families are seeking information that will help them make informed choices in the selection of a university and/ or academic programme." (Dill, 2005 p.495)

The success of the global rankings has also been attributed to globalisation of higher education which has resulted in an increase in competition between institutions for the best students, academics, researchers and funding opportunities (Hazelkorn, 2007a). Vast improvements in communication, technology and mobility over recent years have made it easier for students and academics to look beyond their own borders for educational opportunities. The Shanghai Jiao Tong University Rankings, the first global ranking of higher education institutions, symbolises this new global marketplace for education and crucially emphasises the importance of research performance in achieving global ranking success.

The success of HELTs might also be explained by the increase in publically available information about spending, teaching and research which has arisen from pressure to account for public spending; this constitutes the "*the raw materials of most tables*" (Roberts, 2007 p.3). Whatever the reason for their growth and popularity, the consensus from the literature suggests that HELTs are here to stay.

Considering HELTs were designed with students in mind, this paper looks whether students actually need or care about them. To try and

address this question, the paper firstly looks at the widespread academic criticism of HELTs and secondly the impact that they appear to have on students. In summing up the evidence, a discussion about a possible way forward for HELTs is provided using both published literature and personal viewpoints.

Overview of the main national and international HELTs

Since the US News rankings a significant number of national and international HELTs have been published and garnered significant interest from the public. There are too many HELTs to cover in depth in this paper so a selection of the main national and international HELTs have been selected for further discussion in order to address my question.

National league tables

According to HEFCE (2008) there are three main national HELTs which rank British universities; The Guardian University Guide, The Times Good University Guide and The Sunday Times Good University Guide. The performance indicators used to rank universities in these HELTs vary, as do the weightings attributed to each performance indicator. The Guardian ranks institutions according to 'teaching excellence' (MacLeod, 2009) using criteria such as teaching quality and assessment, staff to student ratio, spending per student, job prospects, entry qualifications, and something called 'value added' which compares qualifications on entry with qualifications obtained on graduation (The Guardian, 2009). The Times Good University Guide uses many of the same performance indicators and also takes into account research performance and completion rates (Times Online, 2010a). Research performance and completion rates are also included in The Sunday Times Good University Guide in addition to heads and peer assessment (Times Online, 2010b).

The common feature of these three league tables is that they are all published by reputable national newspapers. HELTs generate public interest and for newspapers, this equates to increased sales; it is therefore unsurprising that a number of national newspapers have produced their own HELTs in the hope of owning a piece of the lucrative market. Another similarity is that they all have dedicated web pages which allow the user to re-order the ranking to reflect the 'best'

university in the performance indicators which are the most important to them. This is a useful feature for students and helps make the ranking more personal and meaningful to them. All three HELTs rank UK universities in a single list from best to worst.

International league tables

There are two prominent global league tables; the Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU) Rankings and The Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) University Rankings. Unlike the national league tables, global tables were not produced with the student audience in mind. The SJTU ranking was first published in 2003 and according to (Marginson, 2007c) is the most influential of the global rankings. The SJTU was originally produced to assess the gap between Chinese universities and 'world class' universities which are considered by the SJTU rankings as those institutions with significant numbers of Nobel Laureates, highly cited researchers, and publications in important scientific journals (HEFCE, 2008). The THES was published shortly after the SJTU in 2004 as an exercise to look at the standing of universities on an international stage. The weighting of performance indicators is heavily biased towards opinions of academics and recruiters, but also considers citations and numbers of international students and staff (HEFCE, 2008).

Marginson (2007c p.309) believes that the global rankings have achieved a certain level of credibility with the public, and as a result have become very influential at the institutional and governmental level. At the institutional level, universities concentrate resources on trying to succeed within the narrow parameters of the rankings to improve their performance globally. At the governmental level a high global ranking is considered "*a symbol of national achievement and prestige and as engines of economic growth in a global knowledge economy.*"

Young people looking to study overseas may find the global rankings helpful in determining which university to apply to, although the performance indicators which are predominately research and reputation focussed are arguably of limited value to undergraduates. The financially rewarding overseas student market and the potential influence of the global rankings in attracting foreign applicants are likely to drive competition between world class universities.

Criticisms of HELTs

HELTs, particularly the newspaper rankings and the global rankings, are widely criticised by the academic community. A few criticisms are discussed further which are particularly relevant to my question.

Most ranking systems are generally quite clear to the user; in the English Football League teams are ranked in order of points accumulated throughout the season, in the Official UK Music Chart artists are ranked in order of sales. HELTs are not so transparent or easy to understand and often publishers do not make it clear to users how the scores are arrived at. This leaves users to interpret the tables in their own way and most likely at face value with the university at number one being considered the best and so on.

Table 1 shows the University of Nottingham's league table position over the last five years in the two global rankings.

Year	SJTU Source: www.arwu.org	THES Source: www.timeshighereducation.co.uk
2009	83	91
2008	82	86
2007	81	70
2006	79	85
2005	83	97

Table 1: University of Nottingham global league table performance

Nottingham has remained fairly constant over the last five years in the SJTU ranking, whereas it has been particularly volatile in the THES ranking with a difference of 27 places between its highest and lowest ranking. There were no major strategic changes at Nottingham to warrant this change in ranking position; it is clearly the methodology during this period which changed and this reinforces the earlier point about publishers making interpretation by the user difficult.

Another criticism of HELTs is that there is little consensus on what 'best' means in higher education i.e. how can quality be measured? 'Quality' is a very subjective term and the different stakeholders will

measure quality in different ways, therefore defining academic or institutional quality is proving particularly difficult. Publishers of HELTs impose their own views as to which inputs and outputs reveal the quality of an institution, often without a good explanation as to how they arrive at that definition. Usher (2007) nicely summarises the point,

“Clearly the choice of indicators and the weight given to each indicator makes an enormous amount of difference in the final output. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that when publishers advertise their product as a guide to ‘the best’ institutions, it is the publishers themselves who largely decide the best simply through their choice of indicators and weightings.”

Yet Oswald (2001 p.5) believes that the methodology employed by publishers to generate the HELT *“would not be tolerated by journalists to create a league table of newspapers.”*

Eccles (2002) suggests that HELTs say more about the students of a particular university than the university itself, demonstrated by use of performance indicators such as ‘A-level scores upon entry’ or ‘proportions of students with first or 2:1 degree classifications.’ HELTs reward universities for doing well in these measures, yet institutions who admit predominately high achieving A-level students are bound to have a greater proportion of students achieving good degrees because of the academically bright nature of their students. This does not provide students with a useful indicator of teaching quality as such students will perform well regardless.

League tables are also open to abuse and manipulation by institutions looking to improve their HELT position. There have been reported instances for example of institutions encouraging students to fill out the National Student Survey (NSS) in a more positive manner (House of Commons, 2009). Results from the NSS are used in all of the main national HELTs, so of course a more positive NSS result will have a knock-on effect on HELT performance.

Eccles (2002 p.425) also criticises HELTs because they ignore the information needs of many ‘non-traditional’ students groups and in doing so, *“reinforce a traditional view of what a university is”*. Data from part-time, mature and overseas students, and those who have entered university in a non-traditional way, is excluded from the HELTs. As such, the information might be relevant to school leavers

with A-levels who are looking to pursue full-time undergraduate degree courses, but it may be of limited use for 'non-traditional' students, particularly those on the government's widening participation agenda. Information is also provided on an institutional basis rather than by subject or faculty therefore excluding some information which potential students would find helpful (HEFCE, 2008).

Another criticism noted by Hazelkorn (2008), is that HELTs do not compare like for like. Universities differ in so many ways, for example in terms of size, mission, student population, variety of courses, and research interests; so it makes little sense to compare them on a single scale and in effect makes the comparisons of differing institutions meaningless.

Impact of HELTs on students

Clark (2007) summarises the empirical evidence relating to student usage of HELTs in terms of access, choice and opportunity after graduation. The evidence collected was from around the world although it is biased towards the US higher education system; however she stresses her findings could be applicable in other western countries. She points out that the commercial HELTs in western countries seem to disadvantage low incomes students and those from minority groups (whilst benefitting the high income high achievers) because of the way in which universities respond to strategically improve their ranking position. Some of the ways in which they might do this are described in the previous section.

Hazelkorn's (2008) survey of higher education leaders and senior managers revealed that ranking position is taken very seriously by institutions to the extent that improving HELT performance is often included in strategic plans. HELTs are having the effect of encouraging institutions to try and beat the system by adjusting their performance in relation to the key performance indicators being measured in the ranking.

Research by Morley (2007), which looked at the information needs of employers relating to higher education quality and standards, showed that a quarter of employers questioned cited league tables as their main sources of information about the quality and standards of an institution, and 80 percent of employers stated that reputation was

important in decision making related to marketing and recruitment. This is a worrying trend which adds weight to Clark's (2007) assertion that low income and minority students are disadvantaged by HELTs. It is well established in the widening participation literature that students from disadvantaged areas are more likely to attend schools and colleges with poorer teaching and resources, and as a result achieve lower grades than their better educated peers. These students may also come from families who place little importance on higher education so may have lower aspirations and view higher education in purely vocational terms. These factors make attending an elite university more challenging for non-traditional students. If employers are only selecting graduates from a small pool of elite universities then this just reinforces the divide between the post and pre 92 institutions. It also makes it more difficult for graduates at the newer universities to get the best graduate jobs. What was particularly interesting from the Morley (2007) paper was that even though employers place such importance on HELTs in their recruitment decisions, many of them were not even sure how they were compiled.

Student usage of HELTs

Considering the criticisms and potentially negative effects of HELTs on students, it is pertinent to ask the question whether students themselves are actually influenced by them. Roberts's (2007) paper summarises the evidence from around the world with regard to HELT usage and notes that the heaviest student users of HELTs include Asian males, those from high income backgrounds, those from families with experience of higher education, and high achievers aiming to attend a top institution. He also suggests that usage is increasing in parallel with the growing numbers of students entering higher education.

The real test, according to Eccles (2002) is not just whether students use HELTs to make their decisions but whether they actually make a difference to recruitment. Robert's (2007) statistical analysis of available data concludes that increases or decreases in league table ranking does not appear to affect the proportion of UCAS applicants at a particular institution. He does however report a strong correlation between high ranking position and high quality students, although considering the regular users of league tables are the high income high achievers, this is hardly surprising.

So which HELTs do students trust and use the most? Robert's (2007) research showed that the newspaper rankings are much more visible

and used than the online rankings and in particular The Times is most influential followed by The Guardian.

The future of HELTs

Assuming HELTs are to be a permanent part of the higher education landscape and students will continue to use them to make important decisions about their education, then it is crucial that they evolve to ensure students are given the best possible information in a way that they can easily understand. The recent methodology change by The Times Higher Education has been well publicised (and repeatedly justified!) in their education supplement over the last 12 months which perhaps shows that they take seriously, and are responding to, criticism from the academic community. They admit themselves that *"dramatic movements in the league tables make the news and generate interest"* but on the other hand *"too much movement raises questions about credibility"* (Baty, 2010).

HELT reform is clearly needed but the difficulty is this,

"Academics rate universities virtually entirely by their research. Students rate universities partly by whether they will have an enjoyable time there. Parents rate universities by the employability they produce in their offspring, the safety of the campus, and the status that the university buys them." (Oswald, 2001 p.6)

Of course Oswald is over simplifying (and perhaps stereotyping) the views of academics, students and parents; but his point is that different stakeholders seek different information about universities. Even though students are the main users of HELTs, there are so many other stakeholders to consider; a HELT may be designed for one particularly user but that does not prohibit other users. So how do HELTs need to evolve to ensure they please all users? Marginson (2007b p.141) makes a start in describing what a good ranking system needs to possess,

"It is important to secure 'clean' rankings - transparent, free of self-interest, and methodologically coherent, that generates an across-the-board dynamic of improvement."

Indeed, but this doesn't really tell us what a good HELT should include. Salmi (2007) suggests some general principles to make rankings more useful which address many of the criticisms of HELTs discussed earlier. They include: clarification as to what rankings are measuring and making this data available for scrutiny by independent bodies; using multiple performance indicators which produce multiple scores (rather than one single ranking) which highlights areas of strength and weakness; an increasing focus on output/ outcome indicators to better measure quality; and comparisons of similar programmes of study or similar institutions so that the unit of comparison is more meaningful.

Marginson (2007a, 2007b, 2007c) and Hazelkorn (2008) look to the CHE Rankings as examples of good practice in HELT compilation. The CHE rankings, which are developed by the Centre for Higher Education Development in Germany, comprise a number of qualities which set it apart from other ranking systems and incorporate many of the principles put forward by Salmi (2007). For example, their comparisons are strictly subject specific as opposed to institutional (they believe there is no such thing as "the best HEI") and institutions are not given an individual ranking position, rather they are assigned to a ranking group (top, middle or bottom) so that minor differences in value indicators are not misinterpreted as differences in quality (CHE, 2010). CHE rankings are compiled using predominately survey data from academic faculty and students and this is supplemented with independent sources (Marginson, 2007a). In addition to the CHE University Ranking, CHE also offers the CHE Research Ranking which analyses HEIs on the basis of their research performance, a CHE Excellence Ranking which identifies outstanding academic departments, and a CHE Employability Rating which looks how well skills and competencies useful to employers are promoted (CHE, 2010). A useful feature of the CHE rankings is that the needs of different users are catered for and most importantly, kept separate. This reduces the possibility of misinterpreting the results.

There are two British websites which operate in a similar way to the CHE rankings; Push and Unistats. Both sites have in common that they allow the user to select the criteria which is most important to them and create their own tailored ranking. The Push site does provide a single ranking list which is made up of performance indicators such as student life, money and job prospects, but it does this more to prove the point that league tables show what their inventors think is important and not what is important to students. It strongly suggests that the results are taken with a pinch of salt! The Unistats website,

which is produced by HEFCE, basically brings together all publically available information about universities in a way that no other website does. It provides statistics which students can use as a platform from which to investigate universities further. Rather disappointingly, despite Morley's research (2007) which looked into rankings from an employer perspective, found that many employers were aware of online ranking sites but chose not to use them for further information on specific courses, preferring to get their information from better known newspaper ranking systems or reputation.

Discussion and conclusion

From my own perspective, as a student and staff member at the University of Nottingham, I cannot say with conviction that I am indifferent to league tables. Did I know a great deal about them before researching this essay? No, but I knew they existed and I knew that Nottingham was 'up there' with the best of the UK institutions. Certainly when Nottingham achieved its highest ever global ranking we all knew about it! As a student I want an education from a top quality institution, and as a staff member I want the research that my group produces to be recognised as world class. A good ranking position in some way justifies my qualifications and my work.

HELTS should not be as popular and influential as they are today. The importance placed on newspaper rankings in particular, by students and other users, appears unjustified and misplaced. Certainly the comments left by disgruntled students on the Push website when it revealed its own single (and rather controversial) ranking, is testimony to this. Their comments were about the fact that Cambridge and Oxford performed significantly less well than they do in the newspaper rankings. Comments like "*how in the earth can Cambridge be ranked 12 and Oxford 58? I don't truly believe in this league*" and "*misguided, ill informed, biased opinions that are groundless with no basis or proper understanding*" (www.push.ac.uk, 2010) were fairly common.

The criticisms in the academic literature are widespread and concerning; they point out that HELTs are methodologically questionable and as a result difficult to interpret. The selected indicators used to make up the rankings reflect what publishers believe constitutes a quality institution and not necessarily what students would consider important in determining quality. The rankings

therefore by and large place the traditional research led universities at the top of the table and the post-92s at the bottom. This is because the qualities that many newer universities possess such as variety of vocational courses, a diverse student body and links with industry are not considered desirable qualities by the publishers of HELTs. Some students however might consider these to be desirable qualities but they are not given a choice, certainly in the main HELTs, to consider university performance against these measures. Professor Driscoll from Middlesex University acknowledges this very point, saying that league tables neglected *"the contribution that universities that have focused on widening participation, like Middlesex, make to raising skills and educational levels in this country"* (House of Commons, 2009). Given these limitations it is apparent that the main national and international HELTs are of limited utility to students in making informed decisions about where to go to university. They say more about power, reputation and wealth than whether a university is suitable for a particular student.

Not only are the main HELTs limited in terms of their utility, they have also begun to demonstrate negative consequences for non-traditional students. Becoming a world-class university, according to Hazelkorn (2008) takes significant investment which few institutions can afford without sacrificing other more social objectives like widening participation. Universities on one hand are trying to increase participation of non-traditional students to adhere to government pressure, yet on the other hand they are publically declaring their strategic intention to improve league table performance, as in the case of Manchester University which was reported in the Times Higher Education Supplement (Tysome, 2004). Within the narrow measures of the main national and international HELTs, achieving both aims is impossible. Widening access to under-represented groups may mean universities have to reduce entry requirements, which means fewer top quality students and perhaps fewer top class degrees; both will negatively impact ranking position. HELTs appear to be creating a divide between government objectives and university ambition and in the same way HELTs appear to be reinforcing the binary divide between old and new universities by making it more difficult for non-traditional students to be accepted into exclusive universities like those in the Russell Group.

HELTs also impact non-traditional students indirectly for example by restricting employer searches for graduates to only a narrow proportion

of the best performing universities, reducing opportunities for graduates at newer universities.

The appetite for HELTs is substantial and unwavering despite the criticisms and potentially negative effect on some groups of students. The introduction of 'top up' tuition fees in 2006 increased the demand for information about the quality of British universities as students and parents realised the financial contribution needed towards a university education. According to HEFCE (2008) the appetite for HELTs is likely to increase even more in the future if the cap on tuition fees is lifted, as universities look to their league table position as justification for higher fees. Lord Patten, Chancellor of Oxford, has already publically declared, "*universities across Britain should be free to charge unlimited fees to maintain their world class status*" (Paton, 2010).

The evidence suggests that students do not get what they need from the single list newspaper rankings, certainly in their current form. The BBC News (1999) reported on this some time ago, suggesting that HELTs "*only show figures for social inclusion, drop-out rates and research productivity. This will mean that anyone wanting to use the tables for "worst and best" university rankings will be disappointed.*"

Students who leave university before finishing their course do so because they chose the wrong course or because the teaching quality was poor or because they do not get enough contact with academic staff (Yorke, 2008); league tables do not help students in researching these important institutional qualities which have a very real impact on the student experience and retention. In fact they may even have the effect of discouraging students to consider some universities because they do not perform well in the newspaper rankings or compromise on their choice of course so they can attend a 'better' university.

So what is the future and what do students needs? Students need information. The Push and Unistats websites, which allow students to make their own rankings based on the criteria which are most important to them and help individualise choice, offer a helpful alternative to the media rankings. Employers and parents would also find such sites helpful in addressing their needs. However online rankings are not as widely used and are unlikely to be until newspapers cease to publish their annual lists. Like Hazelkorn (2008) I agree that rankings should be provided by independent bodies or research

organisations rather than media outlets. Profits and sales should not be motivating factor in the production of HELTs.

An interesting development in rankings this month is the announcement that the NUS are considering compiling its own league table of universities. Attwood (2010), reports that students are keen to establish their own system which enables students to make more informed choices between institutions and courses. Perhaps this is the best way forward for HELTs, giving students more of a say in what information they want about universities and how they want it presented.

Whatever the future, at least a recent government report which acknowledges the limitations and criticisms of HELTs and the possible role the government has bringing reform, is in the public domain and shows that the issue is being taken seriously,

"[HELTs] are a permanent fixture and recommend that the Government seek to ensure that as much information is available as possible from bodies such as HEFCE and HESA, to make the data they contain meaningful, accurate and comparable. Where there are shortcomings in the material available we consider that the Government should explore filling the gap" (House of Commons, 2009).

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