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Internationalisation in Higher Education – an Internationalist Perspective

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Internationalisation in Higher Education – an Internationalist Perspective

Abstract

Purpose – This article argues for the significance of internationalism for the internationalisation of Higher Education. It analyses some conceptualisations and definitions of internationalisation before explaining the concept of internationalism, and variations of it, in order to demonstrate that internationalism has a moral dimension which could, and I argue should, provide a normative value base for the processes of internationalisation.

Design/methodology/approach – This article is a cross-disciplinary conceptual exploration.

Findings – The argument concludes with a listing of principles which should give a moral direction to internationalisation.

Research implications – The approach proposed is the basis for evaluations of different aspects of internationalisation such as the design and implementation of curricula.

Practical implications – The approach taken here, if implemented, would lead to changes in curricula and processes of internationalisation.

Social implications – The impact of internationalisation, and particularly of student mobility as an aspect of it, is already significant and the perspective presented here would lead to more coherent interactions in mobility situations.

Originality/ Value – Using the neglected concept of internationalism brings a new perspective and challenge to internationalisation.

Key words – internationalism, internationalisation, morality, curriculum, students, academic staff, non-academic staff

Paper type – conceptual paper

Introduction

'Internationalisation' in Higher Education[1] is a worldwide phenomenon (Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2014). Although there are variations in practices and definitions –Yemini (2015) provides a recent overview – there is much similarity in the rhetoric and an avid interest on the part of researchers, who are themselves part of the process. Their writings on the topic are most often conceptual and theoretical; empirical investigations are less frequent. Furthermore, in the earlier phases, as Sanderson (2011, p. 661) points out, research 'focused on activities at the organisational level and the social and academic experiences of international students'. In some recent work, a new emphasis has been placed on curriculum and pedagogy (e.g. Ryan, 2013) with the interest in strategy or in the relationship between research and practice (e.g. Streitwieser & Ogden, 2016)[2] continuing. There is much less attention paid to the educational purposes of internationalisation, and I shall in the following argue that internationalisation needs a morality, a direction, which would be most evident in curriculum but also present in structures and administrations, and that such direction can be given by 'internationalism'. I shall first analyse some existing conceptualisations of internationalisation, before discussing how it differs from 'internationalism' and how the latter can be the basis for a moral direction.

Conceptualising and evaluating 'internationalisation'

The conceptual and theoretical activity has produced many reviews of 'internationalisation' and its evolution, as writers apparently feel obliged to put their own interpretation on existing discourse. They usually begin with the relationship of 'internationalisation' and 'globalisation'. They often include reflections on previous attempts to define 'internationalisation', and sometimes they analyse the strengths and weaknesses of

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[1] There is surprisingly little about the internationalisation of schooling, with the exception of 'international schools' (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004) and 'élite schools' (Rizvi, 2017). Recent work in Israel has focused on the tensions in state/public schools between national curricula and cosmopolitanism (Yemini et al., 2014).

[2] There is increasing evidence of this in websites which propose to help teachers internationalise (e.g., http://scu.edu.au/teachinglearning/index.php/83; http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/cci/resourcekit.html; https://www.adelaide.edu.au/learning/teaching/curriculum/intcurriculum/)

taxonomies of internationalisation practices. Among the more interesting reviews are Vinther and Slethaug (2013) who use three pairs of opposites – unification or diversification, convergence or divergence, symbolic or transformative – to categorise different responses to internationalisation. Unification and convergence are produced by the desire to attract students from many parts of the world and offer them the kind of courses they recognise with certification processes which will be subsequently recognised in their own countries[3]. In this case any change in curriculum processes will be 'symbolic', Vinther and Slethaug argue, but there is a potential for the diversity of students to lead to true or 'transformative' change through diversification and divergence. Gacel-Ávila (2005) starts with definitions and concepts, as is found in other reviews, but she considers purposes other than the usual ideas about preparing students for work in a globalised economy. She draws on systems theory and critical pedagogy to suggest that there is a potential for internationalisation to become 'a new paradigm' for higher education with new educational purposes and curricula. Like Vinther and Slethaug (2013), she sees internationalisation as a force for change, and here we see a more precise statement about the values which should be pursued in internationalisation:

> The international curriculum should therefore focus on developing in university graduates respect for humanity's differences and cultural wealth, as well as a sense of political responsibility, turning them into defenders of democratic principles of their society, and true architects of social change (Gacel-Ávila, 2005, p. 125).

We need to turn our attention away from managerial practices, she says, and from arguments about the relationship to economic 'drivers', in order to consider the values which internationalisation can embody.

Rizvi (2007) is another author who criticises instrumental economic thinking, and the reification of cultures, a 'neo-liberal imagery' based on human capital theory which distorts the purposes of education. The instrumental perspective should be complemented if not replaced – it is not clear which, in his view – by critical understanding of global change and a 'critical cosmopolitanism that views all of the diverse people and communities as belonging to the same universe' (Rizvi, 2007, p. 400).

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[3] The usual flow is from developing to developed countries and it is interesting to note how Chinese universities are attracting international students from Asian countries less economically developed, as China becomes an international economic force.

Stier's (2006) analysis echoes Rizvi's distinction between instrumentalism and what Stier calls 'educationalism', derived from the German concept of 'Bildung', the recognition of 'the personal or societal value of learning itself' (2006, p. 5). He adds to this distinction a third perspective, 'idealism', which is a 'normative assumption that internationalisation is good per se' because it will 'urge students to actively demand a global resource-redistribution and to ensure every person in the world a decent living-standard' encouraging tolerance and respect, and 'contribute to a democratic and fair world' (Stier, 2006, p. 3).

Woodin, Lundgren and Castro (2011) also take their starting point in 'educationalism', and operationalise it by using the concept of 'Intercultural Dialogue', defined by the Council of Europe as:

> an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect (Council of Europe, 2008, p. 46).

This is a concept useful for evaluating the discourse of universities and their documents, an opportunity, they say, to evaluate internationalisation policies in terms of their contribution to individual and social development, 'thus moving from the discourse of instrumentalism to that of educationalism' (Woodin et al., 2011, p. 129). They are, however, largely disappointed by what they find in three case study universities in three west European countries. There is still much to do and my argument here is that 'internationalism' provides the direction needed.

Nationalism and internationalism in higher education

It is a commonplace to assert that internationalisation is not recent, that universities have long been 'international'. For example, Jiang (2008, p. 347), citing previous scholars to demonstrate that his is a widely held view, begins his article with the assertion that:

> the internationalisation of higher education (HE) is not a recent phenomenon. Universities have always been international in character in terms of 'the universality of knowledge' (Brown 1950, cited in Knight and de Wit 1995:6) and by being an international community of scholars (Blok 1995).

A similar emphasis on the 'universality of knowledge' is found in Svensson and Wilhborg (2010, p. 597) but here formulated as a general, timeless statement: 'universities are therefore by nature of their commitment to advancing human knowledge, international institutions'. In both cases, authors refer to previous writers who take the same view, and accept the commonplace unquestioningly.

Enders (2004, p. 364) takes a more nuanced position. He too refers to the European medieval university and 'grand notions of students moving freely from Bologna to Paris to Oxford', to the significance of 'international recognition and reputation' for universities, and to 'the universal conception of knowledge', but argues that there is here a degree of mystification. We should look more carefully at the modern university and its role in nation-building. He points out, writing over a decade ago, that 'the contemporary university was born of the nation state, not of mediaeval civilisation', that it was and still is funded nationally, contributes to the education of national functionaries (and, I would add, of national elites), to national military-industrial complexes (and, again I would add, acts as the repository of national memories in literature, music and other arts).

A decade or more later, there is undoubtedly a tension between national and international funding, as universities in Europe seek European Union funding for example through 'framework' programmes such as the current 'Horizon 2020', and universities in many other countries seek to fund their teaching through higher fees for international students. Yet this too is not a new phenomenon, and Wittrock (2014) traces it to the 19th century and to the integration into the university of scientific specialisation in research. One might argue that the tension today seems to be resolved in favour of the international rather than the national, since funding for research is more international than national, but this may be only the effect of the highly visible rise in the internationalisation of research and its effects on funding.

At the same time there is considerable doubt that such changes are having any impact on teaching and teachers. Sanderson (2011) echoes concerns cited above about the focus on the institutional, managerial level, in the much quoted work of Knight (e.g., 1997 and 2004), and the writings of other authors. His own focus on teachers refers to a 'profile' of the qualifications or characteristics teachers need if they are to produce 'internationalised learning'. One of these characteristics is to 'understand the way one's academic discipline and its related profession (e.g., physiotherapy) are structured in a range of countries' (Sanderson, 2011, p. 664). He does not develop this further, but this is a crucial issue since

students from other countries, with other traditions in a discipline and its related professions, encounter a taken-for-granted and unquestioned induction into 'our' discipline through an equally unquestioned teaching process. This is likely to be alien and potentially impassable hurdle for them, being a way of thinking which is 'our way' and essentially 'national'.

We have thus arrived in the midst of 'curriculum', a term used in varying ways to designate different aspects of the phenomenon of teaching-and-learning, for example, 'learning outcomes', 'learning processes', 'teaching purposes', 'media of instruction' and so on. The notion of an 'internationalised curriculum' – and 'internationalised learning' to use Sanderson's (2011) phrase – needs to be clarified if internationalisation is to have an impact beyond matters of institutional structures.

One view of an internationalised curriculum is that it should as far as possible be the same everywhere, following the trend to 'unification' and 'convergence' noted by Vinther and Slethaug (2013), but this is highly problematic because it is argued that it will lead to 'Westernisation'. Jiang (2008, p. 5) is interesting because he writes from Asia and refers to internationalisation as being a process of Westernisation, but 'Western' is silently synonymous with 'US American', and this silent equating of 'the West' with the USA is widespread, though often unnoticed, in discourse in East Asia. Jiang's position is also flawed in other ways. A 'western' curriculum does not exist, any more than an 'eastern' one does. Within 'the West', Vinther and Slethaug point out that, despite an attempt in the European Union to harmonise higher education through the Bologna agreement, there are significant differences from North to South:

> Regarding typologies, it seems clear that southern Europe and northern Europe adhere to different beliefs and philosophies. In written and oral surveys at a Danish university, students from Spain and France note, for example, that class discussion and group work among students are common in Denmark but not usual in their home countries where the authority and dominance of the teacher are higher (Vinther & Slethaug, 2013, p. 799).

Yet this analysis too falls into the trap of generalising regions of 'North' and 'South', and people within Spain and France would undoubtedly identify differences between the two national traditions of teaching-and-learning.

Perceptions are nonetheless powerful, and lead to resistance to perceived 'Westernisation/ Americanisation' and intellectual colonisation. Palmer and Cho (2012) describe the shift in South Korea from an attempt in the 1990s to imitate 'western' universities, as a means of gaining global status, to new policies in the 2000s where universities have sought – in a process of 'glocalisation' – their own version of internationalisation. Others have noted this too. Svensson and Wihlborg (2010) cite Yang (2002) who in turn cites Pennycook (1996), and all are concerned with the detrimental effects of internationalisation, the potential for internationalisation to become a new form of colonisation and the one-sided adoption of 'Western' values. They take up the old argument that universities should be 'universal', and that universities in western countries should be looking to integrate into their worldview traditions of university teaching from 'Eastern' countries, not least China.

'Glocalisation' and 'universal' approaches to curriculum are thus two possible developments. A third is to argue that university graduates should have skills and knowledge fitting them for a career in a globalised economy following 'Western' principles and should be taught intercultural competence, which has both instrumental and educational value (Stier, 2006). Intercultural competence is instrumental in that it permits more effective working in the global economy, but also humanistic because it prepares people to live in a multicultural environment and to identify themselves as 'global citizens' (e.g., Haigh, 2002, p. 53) or 'cosmopolitan citizens' (e.g., Osler & Starkey, 2003) or 'intercultural citizens' (e.g., Byram, 2008).

Internationalism and its values

Whatever the nuances between 'global', 'cosmopolitan' or 'intercultural' citizens – an issue which cannot be pursued here – they need to be, I would argue, 'internationalist'. But this too needs some further analysis. 'Internationalism', unlike 'internationalisation', has not been widely treated in research in education nor, as Kuehl (2009) says, in historiography. Kuehl shows that this has led to a lack of clarity in definitions by historians and the same appears to be the case in education.

We need to return to 1960 to find an attempt by an educationist to venture a definition which he hopes will be uncontroversial:

> What I mean by internationalism is a readiness to act on the assumption that mankind as a whole is the proper society to have in mind for matters that cannot with safety or with such good effect be left exclusively within the domain of smaller social groups such as nations. I think it will be agreed that this is not an extravagant definition (Elvin, 1960, p. 16).

The definition immediately indicates that 'internationalism', not only in its etymology but also in its nature, has to be analysed in relation to 'nationalism', which is indeed a logically if not historically prior concept[4]. Moving from educationist writing, where internationalism hardly appears, we can find in other sources a means of deepening the argument. Malkki (1994) considers nationalism and internationalism to be neither analytically separable nor antagonistic for 'internationalism does not contradict or subvert nationalism, on the contrary it reinforces, legitimates and naturalises it' (p. 61). This is challenged, however, when different kinds of internationalism are considered.

The complexity of the different analytical types of internationalism and its connotations, which change over time, are, as Halliday says (1988, p.188), best caught in the notion of the 'cluster concept' where there is no single core meaning. Within the cluster, the most recognisable in the European tradition is 'liberal internationalism', described by Halliday as:

> a generally optimistic approach based upon the belief that independent societies and autonomous individuals can through greater interaction and co-operation evolve towards common purposes, chief among these being peace and prosperity (1988, p. 192).

Holbraad too (2003, p. 39) links liberal internationalism with 'confidence in the rational and moral qualities of human beings' and 'faith in progress towards more orderly social relations'.

The second type of internationalism is what Holbraad (2003) calls 'socialist internationalism', in which he distinguishes 'reformist' from 'revolutionary'. Others also refer to the link with socialism (e.g., Kuehl, 2009) or to a 'radical or revolutionary' internationalism (Halliday, 1988). Revolutionary and reformist are distinguished by different

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[4] According to Halliday (1988), the term 'internationalism' was coined as a consequence of Marx's focus on proletarian unity. However, Vincent (2002, p. 192) argues 'internationalism' was coined by Jeremy Bentham in the 1780s 'to name a part of his legal theory which was concerned with the "law of nations"'.

kinds of response to nationalism. Where all other types of internationalism, including reformist socialism, accept nationalism as an inevitability, revolutionary internationalism posits a basis in a non-nationalist solidarity of the proletariat, believing that class affinities are stronger than national allegiances.

Identifying another variety of internationalism, Halliday argues that liberal internationalism has been challenged by 'hegemonic' internationalism, defined as:

> the belief that the integration of the world is taking place on asymmetrical, unequal terms, and that this is the only possible and indeed desirable way for such an integration to take place (1998, p. 193).

The obvious manifestation of this has been colonialism and its 'civilising mission', but it is also present in contemporary international relations dominated by a very few states and symbolised in the omni-presence of the English language. As we saw above, some writers argue that the hegemony of a certain type of 'westernising' internationalisation is inevitable, and others see it as a threat to diversity which has to be countered by 'glocalisation'.

The cluster concept for internationalism is, then, complex, but Halliday (1988) suggests that all types of internationalism share three characteristics. The first two are descriptive. First, there is a recognition that there is an internationalisation of the world – which others would label globalisation – i.e., a binding together through communications and trade, begun in the 19th century with the invention of railways and steamships. The second common characteristic is the management of the impact of economic internationalisation or globalisation on political processes. Whatever the convictions of national groups or entities – governments, trade unions, feminists, or opponents of nuclear power or capitalism – all cooperate more closely as a consequence of the phenomenon of globalisation.

The third characteristic is of a different nature. It is the normative assertion that the first two are phenomena which should be welcomed, since they promote understanding, peace, prosperity 'or whatever the particular advocate holds to be most dear' (Halliday, 1988, p. 188). The state and nationalism, in this view, are legitimate entities within internationalism only if they promote some set of moral values. There are similarities here with the 'educationalist' hopes for internationalisation heard above from Stier (2006) and Woodin et al. (2011).

A fourth general feature of internationalism mentioned by other authors, is the association with democracy (Jones, 1998). Invoking both Immanuel Kant and Woodrow Wilson, Goldmann (1994, p. 54) suggests that internationalist agendas go hand in hand with democratic change at the domestic level and are 'part of the tradition of internationalist thinking to consider law, organization, exchange, and communication to be more likely to lead to peace and security if states are democratic than if they are authoritarian'. Here too there are echoes of the hopes of Gacel-Ávila (2005) that internationalisation will be infused with democratic principles and of Stier (2006) that it will lead to demands for social change.

Halliday (1988) refers to the normative characteristic of internationalism as 'aspirational', and others link internationalism to a 'moral dimension'. For Malkki (1994, p. 41), the analysis of internationalism can be carried out in two ways: 'as a transnational cultural form for imagining and ordering difference among people, and as a moralising discursive practice', the latter being a matter of 'the ritualised and institutionalised evocation of a common humanity'.

Taking a historical analytical perspective, Lyons refers to 'the humanitarian impulse' in his account of the appearance of many international organisations – including the International Red Cross – in the second half of the 19th century. Holbraad (2003) similarly refers to the humanitarian form of liberal internationalism in the 19th century which included the argument made by J. S. Mill and Gladstone that a new principle of international law allowed states to intervene to resolve conflicts within a state or between states. This is a principle which has become part of the thinking of some non-governmental organisations such as the concept of 'ingérance humanitaire' of the organisation 'Médecins sans Frontières'. The principle also underpins interventions such as the one in Iraq by governments acting in consortia.

The moral dimension is thus also the basis for an emphasis on world peace which was realised in different ways at different periods and which is ultimately related to, and has stimulated the development of, 'peace education'. For Kuehl (2009), another embodiment of this aspect of internationalism appeared in the post-1945 period in the form of 'democratic humanism' exemplified in the Declaration of Human Rights. Malkki (1994, p. 56) takes a similar view, referring to the Declaration of Human Rights as a manifestation of the 'internationalism of transcendent values'.

Internationalist values in internationalisation

A normative view of internationalism is thus available to give direction to the internationalisation of Higher Education. Internationalism involves:

- recognition of the benefits of globalisation because it provides the conditions for cooperation at all societal levels, be they governmental, employment-related, educational or leisure-orientated;

- the pursuit, through cooperation, of understanding, peace and prosperity for all partners equally;

- the implementation of democratic processes, based on Human Rights, through which equality in cooperation can be assured.

In terms of curricula and curriculum design, internationalism thus involves:

- recognition of the existence of many disciplines and traditions of university teaching and research, all of which need to be included in the curriculum;

- the development of an intercultural competence which enables all those who work in universities – i.e., academic staff, students, administrators and support staff – to understand each other and each other's academic cultures;

- the implementation of teaching and research processes which give equal voice to all involved and a rational, democratic approach to solving problems.

It is important to note that both administrators and support and service staff are included among the actors involved in internationalism because hitherto writings on internationalisation dealing with institutional and organisational issues have usually referred exclusively to administrators, whereas support and service staff are the implementers of policy. It is also important to note the significance of equality in cooperation to counter-act the dominance of 'Westernisation' which some writers quoted earlier fear, and wish to reject. 'Glocalisation' is not the only option, provided the dominant Higher Education systems make an effort to understand others and include them in the education of their students.

Finally, although there could be a rejection of the importance of 'democracy' and 'human rights' as 'Western' phenomena, their acceptance in some form is widespread enough (Gearty, 2008) – in 'East', 'West', 'South' and 'North' – for there to be no significant

problem in their being fundamental to internationalism. The specific form they take will be the outcome of the cooperative work done by all actors involved. As Halliday (1988), quoted earlier, suggests, internationalism is aspirational. It may never be attained but it will provide the internationalisation of Higher Education with much-needed direction.

To conclude, we can say that were internationalism to be taken seriously in the mode presented here, it would have three kinds of implications. First, there would be a basis for evaluating internationalisation: to what extent internationalisation processes introduce internationalism. Second, it would have impact particularly on curriculum design, including teaching and learning styles, content and assessment. There would for example be equal recognition of other traditions of disciplinary studies and other modes of learning than those current in a country of even in a continent, and therefore other modes of assessing the learning. Third, it would create a coherent basis and rationale to explain and justify the large scale movement of university students and teachers, and the financial investment this involves.

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