

The 'glocal' terrain of learning and teaching in transnational HE (TNHE): Exploring equivalence, positionality and interculturality in practice contexts

Viv Caruana

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Equivalence, interculturality and positionality

- Principles of quality and sustainability - Equivalence or comparability? operating under own name overseas – **same** standard, or **similar** standard between programmes delivered at home and TNE delivery offshore (Sanderson et al, 2010)
- Interculturality? ‘...the capacity to experience cultural otherness and to use this experience to reflect on matters which are normally **taken for granted** within one's own culture and environment. ... interculturality involves using this heightened awareness of otherness to **evaluate one's own everyday patterns of perception, thought, feeling and behaviour** in order to develop greater self-knowledge and self-understanding.’ (Barrett, 2008)

Equivalence, interculturality and positionality

Positionality?

- Relationships between individuals, groups and communities are subject to a continuous process of change which includes the dimensions of **power, ascendancy, hegemony, subjugation and status** in relation to where one 'position' stands in relation to 'the other'.
- Local conditions may be influential in a positionally differentiated world, but **local factors cannot alone account for uneven development** or relative 'failure' or 'success' in a globalised world.
- Geographical differences in positionality may be compounded by the actions of **positionally advantaged agents who control networks of relationships** that simultaneously position 'others' in a present and possible future state of compliance or dependence

(Sheppard in Vertova, 2006)

Intercultural effectiveness?

‘intercultural effectiveness’ as ‘...the ability to interact with people from different cultures so as to **optimise the probability of mutually successful outcomes...**’

(Stone, 2006: 338)

Positionality and interculturality in practice

- Home academics as role models BUT:
- How do local academics influence curriculum content and learning and teaching processes?
- Locating the 'third place' where equal and meaningful reconstructive cross-cultural dialogue can occur
- Local teachers as cultural mediators and translators making the intellectual property of the home institution accessible to a different cultural audience

(Leask, 2004)

International partnerships – the relationship

- **Communication** – shared meaning, relevance, reliability, timeliness
- **Trust** – honourable motives and intentions, integrity. 3 forms: contractual, competence, goodwill
- **Commitment** – strive for stability, enthusiasm for managing the detail. 2 forms: affective and calculative

(Heffernan, 2004; Heffernan and Poole, 2005; 2004)

So what about the 'glocal' student experience?

Caruana, V. and Montgomery, C. (forthcoming)
'Understanding the Transnational Higher Education
Landscape: Jigsaws of Positionality and Intercultural
Partnership', *Journal of Learning and Teaching in the
Social Sciences*

The 'glocal' student experience?

- Research with students at a branch campus in UAE – students **'satisfied'** with programme effectiveness, quality of lectures and teaching, student learning, assessment and feedback, learning resources, use of technology and social life. Evidence **'...refutes some of the criticisms...regarding quality, political or ideological issues...'** (Wilkins and Balakrishnan, 2013; Wilkins et al, 2012)
- Some students in non-Western countries want to engage with Western knowledge and pedagogies and find adaptation condescending – **'reverse colonialism'** (Yang, 2006)
- Students achieving **'high level positional outcomes'** and **'developing active learning habits'** (Hoare, 2012) **'greater confidence'** to express opinions in different situations (Yang, 2006)
- **Flexibility of program delivery and learning modes** help in maintaining work and family commitments (Yang, 2006)

So what's the problem then?

- Programmes of study drawing on the Western paradigm can be a selling point but **many areas of study are culturally dependent** (Yang, 2006)
- 'Thinking globally' – 'universal discourse' versus creating 'transnational spaces' for learning in which **local knowledge traditions co-exist with alternative perspectives** (Morshidi, 2006) Transnational educators – rather than adopting a 'universalist mindset' should **acknowledge 'cultural distance'** and be prepared to **'learn from ambiguity'** (Hoare, 2013)
- The **'cocktail curriculum'** : predominantly Western style with some reflection of local environment and integration of global considerations, but insufficiently adaptive to students' local experience and background, and failing to give 'real-life' guidance (Yang, 2006)

So what's the problem then?

- Mis-matches in academic expectations – intensive face-to-face delivery (Yang, 2006)
- Few opportunities to interact with students from other countries (Yang, 2006)
- The unintended local consequences of the standardised and globalised curriculum – **racialization** acts as a form of justification for both teachers' and students' concerns in the face of relative failure (Pullman, 2013)

The negative student experience rooted in a deteriorating partnership?

- Low levels of commitment from home institution and huge variability in amount and type of communication
- Failure to identify key roles and responsibilities for partners
- Delays and non-specific moderation feedback
- Failure to establish a 'win-win' relationship
- Departure of key personnel

(Heffernan and Poole, 2004)

So what's the answer then?

Importance of defining, refining and aligning the 'value proposition' for respective stakeholders – students, partner institutions and government. The academic challenge is one of relationship and culture building to generate **'value creating and sustainable models of TNHE'**

(Bolton and Nie, 2010)

The sustainable curriculum?

- Placing the **home institutional culture in context** for the partner
- TNE site no longer ‘remote outpost’ but **co-constructing** teaching and learning in a community of practice with shared concerns and shared knowledge
- Same outcomes but incorporate **local content and assessment** – adapt curriculum, assignments and marking criteria
- Language – localised content is more readily understood, meaning more important than expression? Curriculum planning and **embedding academic literacies?**
- **Moderation** as a broad concept seeking to understand not only assessment standards but content and delivery too.

(Dunn and Wallace, 2006; Heffernan and Poole, 2005; Mahmud et al, 2010; Sanderson et al, 2010; Wallace et al, 2010)

Thank you and now over to you!

Please see accompanying Word doc. for
references