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Addressing Globalisation in Higher Education: An Ecological Approach to Internationalisation

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My talk

- Am in favour of internationalization – vital to the wellbeing and vibrancy of universities
- Scope and purpose of my talk
 - Overview
 - Context
 - » Global
 - Dynamics
 - ‘Internationalisation’ and ‘Globalisation’
 - Europe
 - Challenges
 - Problems
 - An ecological approach

The conference focus

- 'a wider view of higher education internationalisation'
- ['beyond the necessary framework of formal compatibility']
- 'the bonds of cooperation'
- 'respect(ing) cultural diversity'
- And that 'promote a quality culture'
- 'against social inequalities'

Implications

- ‘Cultural diversity’
- ‘Bonds of cooperation’
- Are in the title of the conference
- So they are being threatened – or at least challenged

Exam question

- ‘How might internationalisation in higher education be construed so that it might help to promote diversity and respect diversity?’
- NB: not an academic matter but ultimately a practical matter
 - ‘*Strategic* Internationalisation’

Starting point

– internationalisation and globalisation

- Internationalisation – a strategic response on the part of institutions to globalisation
 - Global economy
 - ‘Cognitive capitalism’ (Boutang)
 - Collapsing of boundaries
 - Shrinking of global spaces (overseas campuses)
 - Interconnectedness
- But NB especially evident among the most marketized countries
- Global and national forces at work
- Pushes and pulls

Internationalisation – many paths

- Internationalisation – (exporting) educational services
- Both flows of students (T function) – 10/200 million students worldwide
 - Turbulent/ unpredictable/ unreliable
 - (subject to government action)
- & flows of academic staff (R function – background of world rankings)
- & knowledge transfer, internationally

Submerged view

- Universities as open spaces
- (cf mediaeval universities – wandering scholars)
- Romanticism
- Value of cultural openness
- But rather indistinct
- A new way of framing the matter?

An ecological perspective

- Ecologies
- An ecology:
- Inter-linked features
- Some kind of unity
- Worthwhile
- But perhaps impaired
- Humanity at fault
- - and has some responsibility in the matter

Internationalisation & impairment

- Internationalisation – connective aspects
 - But it may be *reducing* ‘cooperation’ and ‘diversity’
 - And aids institutional competitiveness
 - and asymmetries of institutional power
- Not only within countries
 - But also globally (the North and the South)
- Within institutions, international students are prized for their economic value
- While, within the body of students, international students remain in their national groups

European dimensions

- The mediaeval university in the C21
 - Not really
- Discourses of 'skill',
 - of formal frameworks of quality control
 - of systematic curricula frameworks (Bologna)
- Valuable differences erased?

Ecological possibilities

- Universities – as cultural spaces
- Enhancing cross-cultural communication
- Pedagogic spaces – for learning about the world
- Even where there are no international students
- Developing human understanding
- ie, distinguish
 - Two axes: (1) institution/ programme; (2) diversity/ cooperation
- Attention needs to be paid to all four quadrants, separately, & *strategically* so.

(a) Programmes of study - diversity

- Diversity of students
- A large university attracts students from 100+ countries
- They have their own 'cultural scripts'
- Pedagogical challenges
- Not just of writing but of the pedagogical relationship
- 'quiet' students
- 'non-critical' students
- Assumptions of pedagogic superiority

(b) Programmes of study - cooperation

- Problem of national preferences among students
 - Pedagogical encouragement for student collaboration?
- The global classroom
 - Bringing the world into the classroom
 - ‘The public philosopher’
- Challenge of professors’ pedagogical identity

(c) Institutions - diversity

- The university as a multi-cultural – and intercultural – space
- A way of retrieving the idea of culture in the contemporary university
- Bringing nations and cultures together
- Respecting difference
 - Indeed, bringing it explicitly into the classroom
- But problems of separateness
 - And contrasting cultural values
- And cultural exclusions (even/ especially among students)
- Identity politics play out on campus.

(d) Institutions - cooperation

- Institutions compete
- Within institutions, faculties and departments compete
- & cooperation?
- More and more evident, not least for research status and as a result of knowledge flows in an internet age
- (Again) issues of hierarchy/ power
- Yes, new possibilities for greater cross-cultural understandings
 - But where is this mentioned in university web-sites
 - A by-product of internationalisation, not an intended outcome.

Conclusions

- Internationalisation was heralded as a cultural and academic good
- Now, for both institutions and students, International higher education is seen as an economic & private good
- Can the spirit of internationalisation be reclaimed?
 - Can institutions do justice to both diversity and cooperation?
 - Only by working systematically through the challenges and the possibilities
 - At both institutional and programme levels
- There are considerable forces at work that discourage such efforts
 - But such efforts are vital in realising the potential of the university in the C21.



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