International Education, Educational Rights and Pedagogy: Introduction

Maja Milatovic
Australian National University College: *maja.milatovic@anucollege.edu.au*

Stephanie Spoto
California State University Monterey Bay: *sspoto@csumb.edu*

Lena Wånggren
University of Edinburgh: *lena.wanggren@ed.ac.uk*

With increased globalization, travel and mobility, international student education has become an academically and economically important part of tertiary education around the world. The increased commodification and marketization of higher education complicate the present challenges in ensuring culturally sensitive and competent pedagogies and enabling international students' educational rights and equal access to opportunities and knowledge. Linking the multifaceted concept of educational rights to international student education and pedagogy, we explore issues related to cultural diversity, safety, vulnerability, welfare, peaceful co-existence in a changing global environment. Opening up further discussions on inclusive, culturally competent and accountable teaching in an unstable and frequently vexed geopolitical space, this introduction argues for an inclusive education that puts learning and social justice at its centre.

Keywords: pedagogy, international education, educational rights, marketization, social justice

With increased globalization, travel and mobility, international student education has become an academically and economically important part of tertiary education around the world. As Shafaei, Nejati and Razak (2018) note, there has been an increase in the number of students looking for education outside their own countries and contexts, making them "a large group of sojourners around the world" (p. 19). This rising trend makes international education an ever-evolving and developing industry due to increased globalization, interconnectedness and technological development. Western countries, in particular, have witnessed the varied benefits of international education with large numbers of students opting to study at their institutions, gain necessary knowledge and skills and establish collaborative networks. In the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom for instance, large numbers of international students form a crucial part of the education sector for a variety of interlinked factors. Concurrently, the benefits of international student education have been documented as enabling knowledge exchange between local and international students, promoting cultural diversity and cross-cultural connections between countries and cultures, facilitating opportunities for international collaborations and contributing to teaching and learning in academic institutions (Leask, 2009; Sawir, 2013; Trice, 2013).

Despite the seemingly complex positionality occupied by those categorized as "international students", discourses surrounding this group frequently run the risk of essentialism, tokenism and imperialist assumptions. Apart from economic benefits, international students are frequently considered to "bring in" a variety of skills and knowledge enabling cross-cultural learning, sharing and networking. The conceptualization of international students in Western countries has

however been challenged by certain scholars who problematize the notion of the international student as a passive, reified object which is "brought into" the local culture and has some "effect" on it. Indeed, this concept relies on homogeneous understandings of culture and the problematic dichotomy between local and "other" cultures which does not account for hybridity, social and historical conditions and cultural diversity of multicultural western societies. As Arthur (2017) points out, international students are diverse, with differing backgrounds, levels of academic preparation and access to resources in their home countries (p. 887). Consequently, numerous researchers have noted that international students identified as a separate, passive category risk perpetuating discourses of "deficit", "deviation" or "absence" which may contribute to racist, homogenizing assumptions and the maintenance of cultural and social stereotypes (Madge et al. 2015; Tange 2016; Straker 2016; Tange and Jensen 2012; Kastberg and Tange 2014).

While labels and categories remain relevant in the way we understand tertiary education and marginalized groups, it is imperative to recognize the risks associated with particular types of divisions. Discussing metaphors in international education, Starr-Glass (2017) recognizes the importance of labels in the process of "sense-making" and categorizing an otherwise confusing world, suggesting that "to be labelled an 'international student' is to be identified as something different and distinct from a 'domestic' student" (p. 1127). Students therefore become "casually relegated to a homogenous group" (Starr-Glass, 2017, p. 1127) which may remove personal agency, individuality and deeply personal motivations behind the decision to pursue an education in other countries. Relatedly, Madge et al. (2015) urge for a reconsideration of the commonly held view of students in the context of "cultural capital" and educational mobility as a reproduction of class advantage, "towards consideration of the implications of student mobility for pedagogy" (p. 682). Such a critical consideration, as Madge et al. observe, would help challenge imperialist constructions of the international student as a "void" or an "absence" which is "waiting to enter the 'light' of the western 'teaching machine'" (p. 684). This aspect is also important when considering university discourses on diversity, as international students are often considered to "enrich" or "diversify" an educational institution and at the same time assimilate into social structures which are permeated with inequalities and exclusions. Such conceptualizations risk reproducing social disadvantage and marginalization of international students.

Apart from cultural stereotypes, increased marketization of international education significantly contributes to homogenizing constructions of the international student viewed solely as a customer bringing in profit. One factor of the large numbers of international students in the above noted countries is evidently economical; numerous researchers have noted the increasing marketization and commodification of international education over the past several decades (Huang, Raimo, & Humfrey, 2016; Woodall, Hiller, & Resnick, 2014; Ek et al., 2013). In Western countries, international education constitutes an important aspect of economy, bringing in profit from high tuition fees paid by international students. As Tran and Nguyen (2015) note, international education in English-speaking countries is "characterised by the neoliberal market-driven principles and the imperialist positioning of international students as 'others'" (p. 959). The customer service model, with its homogenizing impulse and "banking model" of education (Freire 1996), contributes to the objectification and passivization of the international student.

Additionally, universities inhabit contradictory spaces in which they negotiate educational projects, neoliberal political changes, and increasing governmental surveillance of international students and staff. These complexities have been noted by numerous scholars, educators and activists such as Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Sara Ahmed, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Angela Davis, Akasha Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, Barbara Smith, Jasbir Puar, Alexis Pauline Gumbs and many others. Indeed, in their recent collection, Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira conceptualize

the US academy as an "imperial university" (2014, p. 6) implicated in ideologies of domination and unequal social structures, while James and Valluvan (2014) assert that there is a "mutual embrace of racism and neoliberalism" in higher education, neither of which can be unmade without unmaking the other. In another important collection, the authors note the "contradictory culture of academia" (Harris & González 2012, p. 1) in which social inequalities and privileges are reproduced. International education in Western countries does not exist in isolation from hierarchical social and economic structures, but remains implicated in processes of commodification, systems of privilege and oppression, and the ongoing effects of colonialism and imperialism.

In this context, it is crucial to challenge homogenizing and objectifying constructions of international students and note the changed nature of knowledge resulting from international education (Madge et al., 2015, p. 684). Viewing international education as a flexible, hybrid and evolving process, rather than a linear process of international students as passive outsiders coming into a fixed local culture, would account for cross-cultural complexities and assist in challenging stereotypes and ideologies of domination permeating Western educational structures. The particular positionality of international education also requires careful contextualization with current unpredictable geopolitical contexts, conflicts and social inequalities. Due to global conflicts and political instabilities, studying abroad is deeply intertwined with questions of safety and security as tensions grow in multicultural societies due to political conditions, conflict, migration, border control and surveillance. As Offord tellingly suggests: "The changing landscape of culture and society across the world is so rapid and so complex that the need to clarify what is happening is imperative and urgent" (2013, p. 7). In this context, it becomes necessary to critically evaluate international education in relation to the ongoing effects of Western imperialism and colonialism, changing geopolitical landscapes, and concerns regarding international student safety and welfare.

Studying in a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment is an important aspect of determining a study location for numerous international students. The choice of location also has palpable economic consequences for host countries deemed "unsafe" by the student population. As Xiong, Nyland, Fisher and Smyrnois (2017) state, "education institutions and nations that have not prioritized international students' safety from crime have experienced periods of significant downturn in their share of the international education market" (p. 78). Furthermore, international students represent a particularly vulnerable group in terms of acclimatizing to a new environment, dealing with cross-cultural challenges, and experiencing economic and academic pressures due to financial study burdens, high tuition fees and a limited understanding of institutional and employment regulations in host countries. According to Shafaei et al. (2016), dealing with "acculturative stress" successfully is directly related to improved psychological adaptation and well-being (p. 21). For this reason, prioritizing student safety, wellbeing, diversity and individuality along with basic human rights remain crucial concerns.

Taking into account concerns about terminology, marketization, and the imperialist or racist processes in higher education, this Special Issue explicitly links the multifaceted concept of educational rights to international student education and pedagogy to explore issues related to cultural diversity, safety, vulnerability, welfare, peaceful co-existence in a changing global environment, and facilitating social transformation. Our understanding of educational rights is led by Offord's emphasis on a "non-colonising ethics of engagement" which takes into account "the critical link between human rights, colonialism and culture" (2006, pp. 16-17). Acknowledging the legacies of colonialism and risks of conceptualizing and essentializing educational rights as inherently Western, we aim to explore educational rights in the context of human rights as "complex, and rooted in survival, relationship and co-existence" (Offord, 2006,

p. 16). Taking these challenges as a starting point for continuing dialogue, the articles collected in the Special Issue explore and critically evaluate areas situated in the intersections between educational rights, international student education and pedagogy.

Lou Dear's contribution, "The University as Border Control", sets the background for our investigation into the intersections between international education, borders, and immigration control in their particular UK contexts. Dear's article investigates the current conditions of the neoliberal university as increasingly impacted by imperial expansion, globalism and capitalism. These changes have seen universities' administration and the state become more aligned in ways that have implications on staff and faculty – where precarious employment contracts have become the overwhelming norm – and on students, particularly international students. Focusing on this shift in the UK, Dear explores the effect of academic compliance of UK Home Office policies on all students, as faculty are asked to monitor students' movement, attendance, and even beliefs. Drawing comparisons between the UK government's approach to student development and to paternalistic colonial practices, she understands the spread of censorship, paranoia, and fear as a colonial technique of control.

Shifting the focus slightly, Yirga Gelaw Woldeyes and Baden Offord's article "Enabling a Critical Pedagogy of Human Rights in Higher Education through De-colonizing methodologies" and Natalie Stipanovic's "Inclusive Education for International Students: Applications of a Constructivist Framework" each turn from policy and institutional approaches to pedagogical practices. Stipanovic outlines an inclusive pedagogy developed from constructivist approaches, concerned with knowledge creation, lived experience, and the subject nature of knowledge as part of an approach to collaborative learning which might offer an alternative narrative to the capitalist values of the neoliberal university. Complicating the history and legacy of the European Enlightenment and human rights discourse, Woldeyes and Offord explore the ways that universalist notions of human rights were grounds for exploitation, violence, and other violations as the norm, rather than the exception. They then work to activate a critical human rights approach that is responsive to intersectional and complex questions of "existence and relationship, sameness and difference", noting the vital incorporation of de-colonial critiques and critical pedagogies in ways which challenge the reproduction of social hierarchies and oppressions: "Critical human rights education allows participants to understand the ways in which human rights have been used as the languages of both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses of our time". Offord and Woldeyes offer interrelated frameworks for pedagogical spaces in their outlining of *politico-juridical learning*, *critical praxis*, and *de-colonial dialogue* which together function as critical teaching strategies, demonstrating that critical human rights education has the potential to become an important component of de-colonial and critical praxis.

Continuing to look at the ways that education can act as a colonial practice, Iman Azzi's contribution "The Travels of the International Baccalaureate" examines Edward Said's Travel Theory in relation to the International Baccalaureate (IB) and the ways it interacts with (and often erases) local knowledges in postcolonial settings, particularly in the case study presented in Lebanon. Azzi observes that the IB program has encountered a turn, wherein it is no longer functions through its original aims of world peace and understanding, but as a "center for creating the next generation of global elites". Students interviewed at IB schools in Lebanon expressed that their own local perspectives were often ignored, and the international curriculum was described by one student as "American". Azzi argues that while ideas may become global, they cannot remove their place or perspective of origin, and that international schools should do more to unearth and examine the impact of global and local power relations.

Introduction

The aim of this Special Issue is to facilitate further discussions on inclusive, culturally competent and accountable teaching in an unstable and frequently vexed geopolitical space. The above detailed articles all highlight different areas within international education and educational rights. As the articles show, the increased commodification and marketization of higher education complicate the present challenges in ensuring culturally sensitive and competent pedagogies and enabling international students' educational rights and equal access to opportunities and knowledge. We believe that sharing approaches to teaching international students with respect to cultural diversity, equality, and cross-cultural applicability of concepts, methodologies and social issues, is crucial to shaping an inclusive education that puts at its center learning and social justice, rather than borders or profit.

REFERENCES

Arthur, N. (2017). Supporting international students through strengthening their social resources. *Studies in Higher Education*, 42(5), 887-894.

Chatterjee, P. & Maira, S. (2014). Introduction: The Imperial University: Race, War and the Nation-State. In P. Chatterjee and S. Maira (eds.). *The Imperial University: Academic Repression and Scholarly Dissent* (pp. 1-53). Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

Ek, A., Ideland, M., Jönsson, S., & Malmberg, C. (2013). The tension between marketisation and academisation in higher education. *Studies In Higher Education*, 38(9), 1305-1318.

Freire, P. (1996 [1968].) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin.

Harris, A. P., & González, C. G. (2012). Introduction. In G. Gutiérrez y Muhs, Y. Flores Niemann, C. G. González, & A. P. Harris (eds.), *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (pp. 1-17). Logan: Utah State University Press.

Huang, I. Y., Raimo, V., & Humfrey, C. (2016). Power and control: managing agents for international student recruitment in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 41(8), 1333-1354.

James, M., and Valluvan, S. (2014.) Higher education: a market for racism? *darkmatter* 10.

Kastberg, P., and Tange, H. (2014). Discursive Constructions of International Education: How University Lecturers Talk about International Students. *Hermes*, 53, 43–55.

Leask, B. (2009). Using Formal and Informal Curricula to Improve Interactions between Home and International Students. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 13(2), 205-221.

Madge, C., Raghuram, P. and Noxolo, P. (2015). Conceptualizing international education: From international student to international study. *Progress in Human Geography*, 39(6), 681–701.

Offord, B. (2006). Activating Human Rights through Questions of Value and Activism. In B. Offord & E. Porter (eds.), *Activating Human Rights* (pp. 13-29). Bern and New York: Peter Lang.

Offord, B. (2013). Gender, Sexuality and Cosmopolitanism in Multicultural Australia: A Case Study. *GEMC Journal*, 8, 6-21.

Sawir, E. (2013). Internationalisation of higher education curriculum: the contribution of international students. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 11(3), 359-378.

Shafaei, A., Nejati M. & Razak N.A. (2018). A model of psychological well-being among international students, *Educational Psychology*, 38(1), 17-37.

Starr-Glass, D. (2017). Troubling Metaphors and International Student Adjustment: Reflections from a Transnational Place. *Journal of International Students*, 7(4), 1126-1134.

Straker, J. (2016). International Student Participation in Higher Education: Changing the Focus from "International Students" to "Participation". *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 20(4), 299–318.

Tange, H. (2016). Inclusive and exclusive knowledge practices in interdisciplinary, international education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 20(10), 1097-1108.

Tange, H., and Jensen, I. (2012). Good Teachers and Deviant Learners? The Meeting of Practices in International University Level International Education. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 11 (2), 181-193.

Tran, L.T & Nguyen, N.T. (2015). Re-imagining teachers' identity and professionalism under the condition of international education, *Teachers and Teaching*, 21(8), 958-973.

Trice, A. G. (2003). Faculty Perceptions of Graduate International Students: The Benefits and Challenges. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 7(4), 379-403.

Woodall, T., Hiller, A., & Resnick, S. (2014). Making Sense of Higher Education: Students as Consumers and the Value of the University Experience. *Studies in Higher Education*, 39(1), 48-67.

Xiong, L., Nyland, C. Fisher B.S., Smyrnois K.X. (2017). International students' fear of crime: an Australian case study. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 50(1), 77-99.