

International Approaches to Transnational Higher Education (TNHE)

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< Abstract >

This article considers the importance of student mobility worldwide in transnational higher education (TNHE) and research on international students, much of which has focused on Western European institutions receiving students from other countries and continents. There is a desire in this research nowadays to avoid clichéd and binary oppositions of cultures and the “deficit Model” of the East Asian learner. Induction or orientation is here taken as an exemplification of differing approaches to internationalisation in TNHE.

Research by this author in 2010 did indeed find differences in approach to the induction of international students, with more similarities between the UK and Japan than to China. This may be a feature of developmental stages in receiving international students; China has more recently started to receive students from North America and Western Europe, where previously they tended to be from the East Asian region. The focus on adaptation by the student rather than by academic staff and institutions has been noted (Ryan 2011) as the “first step” in the internationalisation process of Transnational Higher Education.

1. Introduction

Internationalisation has become a frequently cited theme in transnational

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higher education worldwide (Brown & Jones 2007, Turner & Robson 2008, Coverdale-Jones & Rastall 2009). However, interpretations of approaches to international students, and the meaning and the impact of internationalisation will vary according to the geography, politics, culture and experience of internationalisation within national Higher Education (HE) systems. There may even be stages in the development of these approaches and policies as managers, researchers or teaching staff in national HE systems gain in experience, or there may be different paths which HE institutions and national governments follow. Many of the factors which influence this are geopolitical factors, over which we as educationalists have only limited influence. The purpose of this research is to consider the impact of internationalisation and student mobility, to consider briefly previous research on the internationalisation of HE, and to take the example of induction or orientation programmes as exemplification of differences in approach to receiving international students. Induction is a key point for international students in their adaptation to new learning systems and cultures; however, comparatively little research has looked at this process. It is here suggested by this author that there may be a developmental cycle in the changing of attitudes towards TNHE with less emphasis on the student's adaptation and more emphasis on adaptation on all sides, by academics, support staff and institutions.

2. Student Mobility across the World

With increasing multi-directional student mobility, internationalisation is a key issue for universities worldwide in the twenty-first century. Higher education institutions in all continents experience the intake of international students. International meetings and conferences consider issues ranging from institutional approaches to curriculum planning, to recruiting and caring for international students to world rankings for universities. The motivations of universities may be largely financial or relatively altruistic (Yonezawa et al. 2009); there are varying levels of government support for outward or incoming individual students. Motivations may be based on raising the status of a university in the world rankings, a key point at the

2010 AC21 conference, or it may part of the related global talent war.

The movement of students across borders is a worldwide phenomenon which has given rise to much research on teaching and receiving international students, much of this in the Anglophone world which receives 40.1% of all international students worldwide (OECD 2011)¹. International students are an important section of the student population in the UK (14.7% of the total student population), even more so than in Japan (3.2%).

3. Research Literature on International Student Experience

In light of the increasing impact of student mobility worldwide, it is unsurprising that a large amount of research has been published in English on this, nonetheless with a preponderance focusing on the students coming into Western European and to a lesser extent North American countries. Research on Internationalisation has tended to focus principally on Chinese students, who form the largest cohort in most receiving countries (Lord & Dawson 2002). Lord and Dawson point out this possibly ethnocentric bias in referring to:

the wealth of information on the Chinese student and the dearth of parallel literature on students from the Indian sub continent (2002: 5)

The emphasis in academic articles is often on teaching international students at classroom or course level within institutions (Brown & Jones 2007, Carroll & Ryan 2005, HEA project “Teaching International Students”) but there has been less emphasis on strategic institutional issues and government support. Developments have tended to focus on the reception and teaching of international students within the context of the national Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), but TNHE is increasingly a multi-directional, worldwide phenomenon. Emerging destinations such as Malaysia or the more established Germany are developing experience in this field (HESA 2010, Verbik & Lasanowski 2007), just as many students from Europe or North America are travelling abroad for study or work

experience and internships, including travel to East Asian countries such as China, Japan or Korea.

In all cases, the need for adaptation has been recognised to a greater or lesser degree, but the question which arises from all this is - whose adaptation is required? The student's or the academic's or the institution's or the education system's? Does globalisation require academic staff and institutions to look to the future in terms of the needs of international as well as home students? And what can we learn from one another?

As a contribution to this debate, an increasing number of conferences across the world has considered the effects of internationalisation in higher education. The Portsmouth series on East Asian Learners (2004, 2006, 2008 2010 in Portsmouth, 2007 and 2009 in Jinan and Qingdao, China) has also moved its focus from the classroom and the learner towards TNHE. This reflects increasing interest worldwide in research in the field of TNHE. Symposia and conferences are being held discussing the needs of international students and how these may differ from those of home students (AC 21, Shanghai 2010; Germany²; Denmark³) although in some countries the focus is more on recruitment than on the student experience. This tends to be an early stage in the developmental cycle of ministries or institutions which set out on the path towards internationalisation. However, a difference in focus in different cultural and political contexts is apparent. There may be emphasis on rankings and becoming a world-class university, as at the recent AC21 conference in Shanghai in 2010, or the emphasis may be on the future as at the British council's series of conferences in the "Going Global" series which includes "changing education for a changing world" and "the future world" among its themes for the March 2012 conference.

In June 2011 the HEA UK conference on Teaching International Students had a different audience. The focus was more student-focused on challenges for universities, students and teachers, including diversity, approaches to teaching, learning, assessment, curriculum and programme design.

3.1 Approaches to Research on the International Student Experience and Stereotyping

As a leading commentator on international Higher Education, Janette Ryan in her presentation at the recent BALEAP (British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes) conference sees the research on international students as following three phases:

- 1) Focus on student - deficit model, early 1990s, emphasis on remediation, *i.e. it was the responsibility of students to change.*
- 2) Focus on curriculum - internationalise for all students, *i.e. it is the responsibility of institutions to change.*
- 3) Focus on future - discourses of globalisation/internationalisation in university mission statements, opportunity for collaborative working *i.e. a joint responsibility to change.*

(Ryan 2011) (added notes in italics)

Early research on the international student experience arising within different contexts is more likely to begin with individual case studies, either from the teacher's or the student's point of view. Later research has then considered groups of students; here the lure of negative stereotyping can be perceived in some of the literature on international students, where the international students are seen as 'bearers of problems' rather than 'bearers of culture'. This view is seen by many (Gieve and Clark 2006, Grimshaw 2007, Ryan 2010a) as oversimplification and "problematism" where the international student is seen as a problem and required to adapt to an unchanged learning environment.

"The perceived inadequacy of Chinese students' learning strategies has been attributed to an apparent reliance on memorisation (rote learning), which is correlated with a passive, receptive approach to knowledge, over-reliance on the teacher, and a lack of critical engagement." (Gieve and Clark 2006: 60)

"Deficient' learning styles: rote learners, lack critical thinking skills;

prone to plagiarism (homogeneous group); don't want to participate in class discussion, only interact with others from similar backgrounds" (Ryan 2010a)

As cited above, much has been written about "the Chinese learner". Negative stereotyping can degenerate into a stereotype of "Confucian heritage cultures" (CHC) in opposition to "Western" cultures (Yoshino 2004) where a number of conceptual problems arise; both CHC and Western are seen as homogeneous groups and the other philosophical influences on culture (e.g. Taoism, Communism) are ignored. This negative stereotyping, where the students from one country (or gender or other subject group) are viewed as a monolith, also leads us to overlook the role of the student as agent (Morita 2004, cited in Gieve and Clark 2006: 65, Grimshaw, T. 2007). There is also a tendency to see differences in binary terms, e.g. "deep" vs "surface" learning (Ballard 1996) and often from an ethnocentric point of view as criticised by the commentators above.

"Enabling the extension of knowledge (Western, good), as opposed to its mere conservation (Asian, Bad)" (Gieve & Clark 2006: 60)

The persistence of a fixed or binary view of "the Chinese learner" often does not take into account more recent and continuing changes in China both within the education system and in the wider geographical, social and political context (Shi 2006, Ryan 2010b). Both Shi and Ryan among others point to the increase in student-centred learning, reforms in education and diversity within the country, as many of us have also experienced in our observation on visits to Chinese institutions. In a forthcoming chapter, Cortazzi and Jin also point out recent changes in approaches to teaching (not yet published).

4. Approaches to the Induction of International Students

In previous research, this researcher has chosen to focus on induction (or orientation) as an exemplification of approaches to internationalisation, both

in academic and institutional terms (Chikada and Coverdale-Jones 2010). Induction is here seen as indicative of approaches to international students and the institutional or sectoral process of internationalisation, these being closely linked. Chan and Dimmock (2008: 189) looked at the meanings of internationalisation & different approaches to internationalisation (citing Knight & de Wit 1995)⁴. They found that in their two case universities respondents saw internationalisation in terms of the activity approach, i.e. they focused on activities which would help the students to adapt, which seems to be the pattern in most universities (e.g. Sheffield Hallam University 2011). At the same time there is agreement on the importance of induction for successful completion of the course (Cook et al. 2006).

In the context of internationalisation, there are also multiple developments at tutor, department and institutional level towards internationalising the curriculum and the classroom. Guidance for tutors has been funded and published, in Anglophone and in Japanese contexts (personal communication from an International Student Adviser in Japan). Examples in English include the “Transnational Education: Developing Leadership Capability” (Curtin University 2011) which provides online courses for academic staff on the theme of Teaching International Students, the well-known and influential book by Carroll and Ryan (2005) or the more recent project in the UK Strategies to enhance learning (Burnapp et al. n.d.) and the major Teaching International Students project of the HEA (Higher Education Academy) where the sharing of cases and solutions is facilitated.

When we turn to the issue of induction, we find a relatively small amount of published research in English but with some agreement in the recommendations on good practice, including the importance of induction and ongoing support for student success. This applies to all students, whether home or international students (Cook et al. 2006, Hassanien & Barber 2007). Although their study was not specifically on international students, Hassanien, & Barber (2007) in their evaluation of student induction in higher education found that “mean values for the international students were significantly higher than the British students, indicating that international students believed these topics to be significantly more important.” They thus emphasised the “imperative role” of as being more

significant for international students (p.39).

Lord and Dawson (2002) considered approaches to socialisation, i.e. adaptation to the new learning culture, as ethnocentric. In their study on the reception and induction of two contrasting student groups, Chinese and Indian postgraduate management students on a pre-MBA course, there were expectations that the Indian students would have fewer problems assimilating, partly due to “the similarities of educational qualification nomenclature” and more cultural links with the UK; the Indian group had more friends or relatives who had studied in UK (75% Indian, 47% Chinese) and friends or relatives living there (62% & 41%). They found that following practical problems at the two initial stages of pre-arrival and encounter, (start date, accommodation, airport meeting) the need later was for personal support (buddy system) with problems of loneliness and academic integration in both groups; there was “insecurity about our expectations of them, desire for more guidance” and a recommendation for “significant input on the culture of learning in the university, and on study skills” (ibid., 13). Both groups had problems linked to memorisation, use of technology, use of textbooks and reading, the role of the lecturer, group work, and English language. Lord and Dawson (2002) recommended training for tutors/administrators, more pastoral care, English classes, classroom time to share experiences and a review of assessments. Many but not all of these practices have since been put in place at UK Universities (e.g. Sheffield Hallam 2011) and elsewhere, especially but not only in Anglophone countries.

Burley et al (2009) in also considering the experience of Indian postgraduate students similarly found a need to “re-orientate the students from one paradigm of learning to another” and to enable the students “to engage in the higher level cognitive skills”. The adaptation by international students at a deeper level is the result both of successful induction and of ongoing support. Foster (2010) gives an interesting example of an online pre-arrival course for Indian students coming to Edinburgh Napier University for Hospitality Management top-up degrees⁹). The online course emphasised the need at an early stage to acquire new study skills and learning culture, and the involvement of students in the

design and pilot. The effect of this will be evaluated in terms of degree results this autumn.

Bond and Scudamore (2010) recommended for Engineering students that induction should include “involving students in practical activities relevant to studying engineering with clear briefings on the activity itself” (p.14) and on “setting ground rules for the working together; mixing students from different backgrounds in groups; involving more experienced students and support staff” (p.14) in induction activities; and “ongoing systems such as tutorial groupings and ‘study-buddy’ pairings” (p.15). They recommended a move “away from the idea of induction as an introduction and towards ongoing, embedded contact with a range of staff and students through group activities, referral to service via tutorials, library-based sessions, and even social activities” (p.15).

The common threads in these studies of induction are the emphasis on the new culture of learning; in other words it is still the student who has to adapt, as mentioned above but researchers also offer guidance on the ways in which academic staff can adapt their teaching style to facilitate student success. This reflects progress from the days when the student was the one who had to carry all the burden of adaptation. It may be that the “emerging contenders” in terms of student mobility will also have to go through this faculty staff development. The more contentious issue of changing the curriculum requires a willingness from academic staff to change their thinking, and can lead to strong resistance. Curriculum change and the internationalisation of faculty members through staff development may be a longer-term process in the university sector of any country, one which cannot be hurried, as with any change of culture. Examples of a more developed attitude towards induction, and thus to internationalisation, can be seen in the findings from research below.

4.1 A Recent Study of Induction in Japan, the UK and China

In order to demonstrate differences in attitudes to international students this researcher conducted a survey in 2010 with a small sample of international students in one university in the UK, three in Japan and two in China on the subject of induction. The results support the hypothesis that

a developmental cycle exists in changing attitudes to internationalisation with increased experience in the field within a national HE sector.

The results showed differences in approach to induction in the respondents' comments, which are briefly summarised here:

- There was emphasis on study information in UK, with more meetings with tutor in small groups. The induction week in departments was preceded by an International Office induction week. UK universities also appear to put more information online, as well as face-to-face meetings in large and small groups and a printed handbook. Online information is included in a pre- arrival module delivered via the VLE Blackboard to which students have password-protected access.⁶. The PrepUP and pre-sessional VLE modules often used film clips with student speakers.
- In Japan there was emphasis on talks about study, social meetings and information about living in the country. The equivalent medium for information sharing was the use of information on paper and presentations by student advisers in English or Japanese to large groups of international students on the Induction day, which followed the Entrance Ceremony day. (There were 31 sheets of paper or leaflets in the orientation packs, including one on earthquake training.) In induction and throughout the semester face-to-face meetings and information on paper were the preferred media. Some of this information was also available on webpages, for different sections of one university.
- The information on China has a number of problems and may be unreliable but may still show differences in approach. The lesser importance of induction, which was cancelled due to swine flu in Sept 09 and the fear that this disease was imported by foreigners, can be seen as an indication of culture. The national political agenda here took precedence over the need to learn a new academic culture; indeed, there was no evidence of awareness of other learning cultures.

Information was more difficult to find in this high-context society (Hall 1976) and UK students felt the lack of information on webpages in China.

Some examples of student comments on induction show the experience from the student's point of view, which may be assumed or unexpected for the information-givers. All information may appear to be equally important (e.g. garbage and learning culture), or there may be a lack of appreciation of the difficulties which confront the new international student.

4.2 What do You Remember from the Induction Process?

- *how to separate garbage customs in Japan* (UK student in **Japan**) (Several students mentioned garbage separation as a point of emphasis.)
- *The start of the course was horrible since we were left to do tons of bureaucratic stuff in a language we hardly understand. Very little guidance was given, at least not in English. (There was no induction.)* (UK student in **China**)
- *It was quite hard to follow it. First of all because I wasn't so familiar with the language and secondly because I was given too much information about a system quite different from the home one.* (Italian student in **UK**)

In this study there were fewer differences between the UK and Japan (medium of giving information) than between those two countries and China. We can see here how, particularly in China, the need for awareness of student needs is easily overlooked, or how induction and guidance on form-filling for bureaucracy may be cancelled at short notice due to government policy on a non-educational basis (the induction cancellation due to fears of imported swine flu). However, even in a university with a

highly developed induction process student needs may be overlooked so that a student may still be overwhelmed by information. The role of international student advisers may also differ; this is part of ongoing research by this author.

5. Conclusion

The process of internationalisation requires the recruitment of international students, of international staff and the international development of existing staff and the creation of a truly international curriculum. The effects of the high level of student mobility require faculty members and university managers to change their teaching practice, curriculum and expectations. The Global 30 programme in Japan is one example of a “live” project currently in its first year of student intake where adaptation on all sides will be needed in order to foster student success.

The considerable body of academic research on TNHE has been cited here with examples of induction for Indian students, where there a consensus on the need for adaptation on all sides rather than merely delivering the same courses in a different language. Guidance for tutors in particular has been funded and published, in Anglophone contexts. Academic articles on internationalisation in Japanese are not accessible to this researcher, but this could be a fruitful source of comparison for future research.

The responses from the survey on induction do reveal some differences in approach, not always the expected differences. Approaches to the induction of international students show a potential relationship between the country’s experience of receiving international students and entry into the TNHE market. We observe a rapid rise in the numbers of international students in China in the last ten years, so an equally fast change process in ways of dealing with international students can hardly be expected. Nonetheless, this supports the idea of developmental stages in receiving international students for a national context and learning culture.

It may be that more recent entrants into this field, the “emerging

contenders” in terms of student mobility, will also have to go through a deeper faculty staff development process in order to enable student success. It is true that many faculty members from China are supported as Visiting Scholars or Masters-level students in the USA or the UK and may return with a desire to change practice in their home institutions. A change process is underway but may be a longer-term process in the university sector of any country, one which cannot be hurried, as with any change of culture.

Notes

- 1) USA 18%; UK 9.9%; Australia 7%; Canada 5.2% (OECD, 2011).
- 2) „Deutsch-Chinesisches Bildungsforums“, Konfuzius-Institut, Universität Hamburg e.V., 9 September 2010.
- 3) Internationalising Education: Challenges and Rewards; a symposium South Denmark University, 21-22 April 2009.
- 4) the activity approach, the competency approach, the ethos approach and the process approach (from Knight & de Wit 1995).
- 5) A “top-up” degree is a well-known expression in British universities. It refers to the common articulation agreements whereby students study for the first two or three years in their home country, with the pass grades recognised for credits prior to entry into the British university for the final two years of a degree programme or final year.
- 6) The Portsmouth university policy that use of the VLE (Blackboard) is obligatory for delivery of or support for learning in all modules including the pre-sessional course. Japanese universities do not offer pre-sessional courses. However, students are supported in their language learning and preparation for the Masters level entrance exam, an exam which also applies to Japanese entrants.

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多国籍化する高等教育への国際的なアプローチ

トリシア・カヴァデール・ジョーンズ

<要 旨>

本論文は多国籍化する高等教育における世界的な学生移動の重要性について考察し、外国人留学生に関する研究に注目する。留学生研究の大半は、他の諸国・地域から多くの留学生を受け入れてきた経験をもつ欧米諸国で行われてきた。本研究が主張したいことは、東アジア出身の学習者に対する月並みかつ二分法的な文化論である「欠陥モデル」から脱却することの必要性である。留学生に対する導入プログラムやオリエンテーションは、多国籍化する高等教育が多様なアプローチをとっていることの実例であるとみなせる。

筆者が2010年に実施した調査からは、留学生に対して受け入れ大学が実施するオリエンテーションに関して、英国と日本の間により多くの共通性を見つけることができた。他方、中国と日英との間には共通点は少なかった。このことは留学生受け入れに関する経験知の差によるものではないかと考えられる。中国が北米・西欧諸国からの留学生受け入れを活発に行うようになったのは最近のことであり、以前は東アジア地域からの受け入れが主であった。教職員や大学組織よりも、まず学生の異文化適応を重視する視点は、多国籍化する高等教育における国際化への「第一歩」であると考えられている(Ryan 2011)。
