

Internationalization and Hegemonic Practices

Dr. Shazia Nawaz Awan

Dalhousie University, Halifax Nova Scotia, Canada

“Internationalisation of the curriculum is concerned with preparing graduates to live and work effectively and ethically in an increasingly interconnected world.” – Betty Leask –

As a teacher, a researcher, and in my current role as an educational developer, I really connect with this definition given on Betty Leask’s IoC website. I find it quite comprehensive in the sense that it depicts internationalisation as a process (preparing students); it situates the process of internationalization in the whole world, and it promotes global citizenship (living) and employment (work). And the best part of the definition is responsible, effective, and ethical internationalization.

Internationalization in higher education is generally understood in terms of student and faculty mobility in ways that when students and faculty move to the Northern hemisphere, it is to acquire knowledge, and when they move to the Southern hemisphere of the world, it is to disseminate knowledge. These understandings have created an intellectual imbalance where there are binary divisions between the ones who give and the ones who receive. This division between the dominant and the dominated, the giver and the receiver, and the East and the West is reinforced by the assumption that “Western values, pedagogies, and English language is best, or at least better than the ‘rest’” (Sperduti, 2017, p. 10) as internationalization is exported with a focus on Western education systems, specifically in higher education. This mindset of domination has created a sense of hegemony in the West where practices—such as the way of teaching and assessing—can be exported, and where the language of knowledge is mostly English.

In her article, “Making the case for responsible internationalisation,” Luciane Stallivieri (2019) outlines five elements as the core components of ethical and responsible internationalization: balance, accountability, sustainability, inclusion, and compliance. She advocates for a balanced partnership, which offers mutual opportunities for learning. If I connect the dots from Leask’s definition quoted at the beginning of this piece to what Stallivieri refers to as ‘internationalised eco-system of knowledge’, it becomes clear that internationalization is about more than making global connections and opportunities for exchange; rather, internationalization is about giving back to the societies where these experiences have been gained.

I feel it is important to understand the process of internationalization before it becomes the proprietary ownership of one hemisphere of the world, and to look at this process critically. Additionally, we cannot just point out the gaps, but it is also important to propose and take action. Let's conceptualize, define, and implement the process of internationalization as counter-hegemonic to the currently prevalent education system that "has been exemplified in a limited range of cultural perspectives represented in curricula..." (Schoorman, 2000, p.5), and to unpack the process to prepare students for a more interdependent world allowing the creation of more mutual relationships and dependencies globally.

REFERENCES

- Leask, B. (nd). *Concepts and Definitions*. IoC in Action. <http://ioc.global/concepts/>
- Schoorman, D. (2000). What really do we mean by 'internationalization?'. *Contemporary Education*, 71(4), 5-11
- Sperduti, V. R. (2017). Internationalization as Westernization in Higher Education. *Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education*, 9(Spring), 9-12
- Stallivieri, L. (2019, August 31). Making the case for responsible internationalisation. *University World News*. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20190829092237117>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shazia Nawaz Awan, Ph.D., is an Educational Developer (Internationalization and Intercultural Competency) at the Centre for Learning and Teaching, Dalhousie University, Halifax Nova Scotia.
