Proving, improving and (dis)approving internationalisation of Higher Education

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Abstract

Answers to Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) international students’ issues with the Higher Education curriculum in western universities are inadequate and the solutions to many of their problems usually seem improvisations rather than improvements. Studying and proving the academic adjustment issues of many NESB international students at my university and making efforts to improving their plight, I have reached a juncture of trepidation. In my research and in my work as a Learning Skills Advisor I have begun to realise that the situation especially related to postgraduate NESB international students is beyond the “proving and improving” role of research and scholarship. In many cases, internationalisation of Higher Education seems to be an eyewash to secure the economic interests of western universities. An intercultural dimension to teaching and learning practices would be inept and superfluous if the curriculum designers do not reconsider the course, subject and assessment outcomes in relation to the prior language, knowledge and skills of those students whose very presence gives the international dimension to western universities. It seems that to bring true internationalisation involving all students, requires a complete sea change to the very philosophy of the internationalisation of Higher Education.

Introduction

I will begin my paper with a story of drowning pigeons and of two friends who in their own manner tried to save them. Standing on the banks of a river these two friends saw a number of pigeons floating down the river. Realising that the birds were actually drowning they tried to rescue them, however, within no time more pigeons came floating in the water. The perplexed friends looked at each other and one of them jumped in to save the birds. But the other friend instead of staying to save the drowning pigeons went to find out the reason behind this strange phenomenon. As he went up further, he found a man taking the birds out of cages and throwing them one after the other into the river. When the friend approached him, the man shouted at him “I am liberating these stupid birds but they refuse to fly”. He explained to this mad man that the freed birds could have been suffering from a sudden shock after being caged for a long time and might need a few minutes to gather their courage to fly away. Soon between the two of them, they freed all the birds without drowning them.*

So what is the connection between this story and my paper? Well to some extent, this can be the story of most Learning Advisors (LAs) in western universities who provide academic literacy support to Non English Speaking Background (NESB) postgraduate international students. To some extent their academic support does help some individual students, however, in the absence of a strategic proactive approach, their bandaid solutions prove short-term and remedial quick fixes, as more and more students keep needing to be rescued.

*Adapted from a story heard on radio while driving.
In the last few years as a Learning Advisor at my university, while making efforts to ‘save’ a few NESB international students, I have also been trying to investigate the reasons behind their problems. Joining others who had already reached there, it seems I have stumbled upon the gist of this enigmatic whodunit of internationalisation. Analysing the reasons behind NESB students’ problems at my institute, I have some how glimpsed what is happening up stream, from where to some extent the problem stems. I hope that from here I am joined by others in a move towards finding some solutions.

In my paper first of all, I will give a brief background of my own work in this area. Then relating my own progress as a researcher to the academic discourse on NESB international students and western universities, I will advocate for a shift in the way these students and their issues are considered in western institutes. I will campaign for an internationalised curriculum to be offered to all students and will make a case for a better system of recruiting international students.

I will conclude my paper with some suggestions, which I believe may assist to reason, not only with the man drowning the pigeons but with the pigeons themselves.

Background

Skills of LAs are regarded as magic potions, which many academics (discipline specific) believe, can be utilised to “cure” their NESB international students’ problems. These problems can vary from students plagiarising, their lack of critical analysis and academic style including grammar and other problems in writing and last but not the least their problems in spoken language. Many academics assume that a few trips to the Learning Skills Unit can fix the problem /s, or sometimes just the act of sending their students to these centres gives them some satisfaction that something is being done!

From my own experience of studying in two cultures and then also in my work as a Learning Advisor, I had recognized that especially in the case of many postgraduate NESB international students, their need for cross-cultural transfer was sometimes more urgent than their need for just language support. Moreover, the former need could actually be met by making them aware of the various conventions of western academic culture, for example; essay structure, building arguments, referencing and critical analysis, and students could improve their writing at a macro level, whereas, given the short period of time that postgraduate students usually had at university, it was almost impossible to give them lessons in grammar and make a difference to their writing at a micro level.

Formulating my theory on NESB international students, I started to give my unsolicited advice to many schools especially from where most of the students were being sent for remedial help. To argue for some strategic academic support for international students at my university, I also started collecting some empirical evidence about their problems and their needs.

To a great extent, my work with international students since then has directed the course of my research. However, my research into their academic adjustment issues
has also brought me to a point of trepidation where now, I have actually started to question the way how internationalisation of higher education (HE) is undertaken by western universities.

My Research

While exploring the education experiences of international students at my university (Handa, 2004a; Handa, 2004b; Handa, 2006), I surveyed and spoke to around 250 NESB postgraduate international students across a range of academic disciplines. My aim had been to see what problems these students had, whether they had benefited from the programs that were offered to them and how they could be better helped. Therefore, other than getting their evaluations at the time of the programs, I also conducted follow up sessions after a few weeks into the semester and sent questionnaires to students who had attended any of the programs. Using a mixed method approach of qualitative (questionnaires) as well as quantitative (focus groups and interviews) research to establish a “holistic picture” (Creswell, 2003, p. 4) of the situation, I also approached other Learning Advisors, academics and International Student Advisors for their perspectives.

While collecting my data, which included NESB postgraduate students’ own views about their problems, and their evaluation of the activities that were carried out to help them, I used two theoretical frameworks; one knowingly and one unwittingly. To begin with, I started to evaluate the effectiveness of academic support programs in an action research mode, going through the cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Kemmis, 1993). At that stage, other than improving my own practice as a Learning Advisor, I had intended to present empirical evidence of these students’ issues and their academic needs to the academic community at my university. I had planned to explore the socio-linguistic issues (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1994; Eggins, 1994; Cole, 1996) that impact on NESB international students’ academic adjustment using the Second Language Acquisition theories (Cummins, 1979; Freeman & Long, 1991; Ellis, 1994; Krashen, 1981), to underline the reasons behind their problems.

However, while collecting my data, I realised that what I had planned was not possible. First of all, because having the lived experience of being an NESB student in an English speaking academic environment myself, I was not an objective researcher. Secondly, because of my own socio-cultural and socio-political context, I could not use a positivist approach of recording only what I had set out to gather. I had adopted an interpretative approach and was using participatory inquiry strategies (Heron & Reason, 1997), especially in interviews and focus groups with students. A critical perspective had crept into my methodology because of the “critical and creative impulse” which was a projection of my own experience of “learning to work with the contradictory strains of languages lived, and languages learned” (Bhabha, 1994, p.x). I had, therefore, leaned towards critical ethnography to give voice to these ‘mute outsiders’ (Handa, 2003) in an endeavour to bring social justice (Lincoln, 2005; Madison, 2005) to them.

The questions were designed to get students’ comments on how academic preparation programs had assisted them and whether they had any issues with academic adjustment in Australia. In their responses to the questionnaires, most students just ticked or briefly answered the questions and hardly gave comments. However, in
focus groups and interviews, students were more vocal and open, and shared more than their academic adjustment issues. They did share their frustrations and worries about studying in an English speaking country, but they also talked about their dreams, their personal gains and their career plans.

While discussing my data, for confidentiality purposes, I will not make any references to students’ nationality or the actual courses they were enrolled in. I will just present my collective findings under these headings; Proving, Improving and Disapproving.

Proving

Who are these international students?

International students are full-fee paying overseas students who are mainly Non English Speaking Background or WES (World Englishes Speaking) students, as they have come to be known in the western universities and most are from Asia. According to a recent report (Research Snapshot Series, February 2007), out of the total 2006 enrolments of international students in Australia, almost 80% came from countries like China, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Hong Kong etc. and almost half of them were enrolled in postgraduate courses.

Many postgraduate students in my study told me that their aim in obtaining a western degree was to enhance their careers in their own countries or to use these degrees to get extra points towards their Permanent Residency (PR) application in Australia. Degrees they had chosen also were very much a choice of reason and not because of any passionate academic interest in that area of study on their part. Many did not have an undergraduate degree in the subject of their postgraduate courses. Interestingly some of them did not even plan to work in that area either. Some told me that they were not going to finish the degrees that they were enrolled in. ‘Will change next semester and see something more suitable’, one student told me, ‘every one in my country said that .....is a good degree to get a job in an American company any where so I took admission in it’. Another student said, ‘When I was applying for a course I thought anything is ok and chose ...... to get a PR here’.

Some students confided their fears about working in Australia after finishing their degrees ‘I can’t see myself ever being a ......in Australia, I might have to think for another career’. Even an academic said in his interview with me, ‘Some of them are hardworking and very sweet to work with. But I don’t think they are ever going to be ..............in the ....industry’.

Many of these students have invested large amounts of money towards getting higher education in Australia. Many have taken a loan that they can not afford to pay back if they do not work (more than 20 hours) in Australia. Some of them have already found well paid jobs here and have their priorities set, as a student declared ‘If I have to go to work and my teacher asks me to come for extra classes I cannot come, I am committed’. Another told me, ‘Every day I plan to come here to see you but my work is very busy...’

Some students also shared their feeling of being discriminated against because of their poor language skills as well as the colour of their skin, and they talked of instances
where they had felt left out. For example, not many local students wanted them in their groups, where as European students who also spoke with an accent had a better chance of being accepted. As one of them complained, ‘no one seems to be interested in me’ (Handa, 2004b, p. 3), even their teachers it seemed did not listen to their questions, ignoring them in classes and “left them alone” (Handa, 2004b, p. 4).”

However, many of these students seemed to be making the best of their experiences of studying in another country and culture. Their experiences in western academic culture had certainly enriched them by developing their graduate attributes by teaching them about inquiry and analysis, something that many of them had not done in their previous education system. They had also improved their English, which is an asset in any job here or back in their countries. Many, even though were struggling in studies, had other plans which kept them going, for example, getting a postgraduate degree which would get them a promotion or a job in their county, or getting a job (any job will do), here in Australia, helping their families at home, getting a PR and inviting their family members to join them in Australia, finding a partner, starting a business or simply living in the comforts of the western world. Hence, in spite of many issues and sometimes frustrations with their academic adjustment, there was “a clear progressive journey” (Handa, 2004b, p 6) that many of them had made.

What are the issues?

Most NESB international students and their teachers with whom I have talked have pointed at students’ language difficulties and their lack of required academic skills. Some students also had issues of being in a wrong course and/or not having complete knowledge before hand about the requirements and expectations of their courses. It could also have been the case that many students, who had plans to migrate to Australia, had not been very selective about the courses in which they had enrolled.

Language issues

Many students had poor academic writing skills. So even if they did understand the content, sometimes, they were not able to present it very well. Some were frustrated, as they did not get the mark that they thought they deserved. As one of them said, ‘I understand it all; I was a first class student in my country, a very good .........but here I feel stupid, in my tutorial discussions I can say so many things but who will listen to me? My language..!’ Another one bemoaned, ‘Teachers only take note of our grammar and other mistakes and miss the point that I have’. Some of the academics, I interviewed, also stated very clearly that students could only get a pass with their content information, where as to get a credit they needed some sophistication in their writing. One academic told me ‘It makes it unfair for other students who wrote very well and got only a credit’.

Language needs of these students were very hard to be met and their incompatibility with English language (written and spoken) and with western culture was clearly noticed especially, in courses, which included a professional practice component like Nursing, Education, Management, Hospitality, Journalism etc.
Cultural issues

Sometimes it was not language but other factors that added to international students’ confusion and detriment. For example, local context and the cultural references (Handa, 2003), were very much a part of the classroom practice and the assessment regime of their courses. Tutorial discussions were sometimes based on TV programs, news articles, current views and issues and if students did not understand or share the cultural context of their teachers and class fellows they were lost. Many students could ditto what one of the participants said about tutorials, ‘I can not understand what they are talking about’ (Handa, 2004b, p. 3). Assessment questions in their courses had colloquialisms, acronyms and even quotations from Australian politicians in them. International students, who naturally did not share the local context, often missed the relevance and significance of what they were given. They sometimes also lacked a clear understanding of the conventions of academic writing. They did not know what kind of and what level of writing was expected in their essays, inadvertent plagiarism in many such cases was committed as students failed to reference what they had borrowed from other writers (Handa and Power, 2005).

Improving

Some action and reflection

In the last few years, since the number of international students at my university has increased (it is more than 10% of the total student population) and their academic adjustment related issues are becoming more and more evident, there has been some development in providing academic induction to international students. Other than a regular International Acprep (academic preparation program) offered every semester, many school specific academic preparation and support activities are also being incorporated in programs. There are many enlightened teachers who have started to collaborate with LAs to do this. Because of my own intervention in some postgraduate courses, some improvements have been brought about, where academic literacy tutorials (voluntary sessions) are offered to international students (Handa & Fallon, 2005).

Students’ evaluations have shown that many found these activities “useful” and “crucial” for their engagement with the faculty. With their improved understanding of the genre and the academic conventions like argument building and referencing, the structure of their assignments improved and academics expressed their satisfaction with the outcomes saying that there were “fewer tears” at the time of assessments and in one particular case it was reported that their failure rate had dropped for two consecutive years (Fallon and Handa, 2006).

But unfortunately, in cases especially where academics were not actively engaged in academic support activities, and/or students’ workload demand was very high, many students did not take advantage of voluntary sessions. Either they did not know what they needed to learn or being time poor did not have extra time for any extra-curricular activities on the campus (Handa, 2007).
Disapproving

In the case of students, especially those who had basic language problems, even though they did attend academic literacy sessions regularly, I could see what was being offered did not make a big difference (Handa, 2007). Because of their poor English, they were forced to the path of zigzag learning (Singh and Guo, 2007) between their own language (L1) and English (L2). Reading academic articles as well as listening in lectures in a zigzag manner (translating from one to another) is very demanding and can be difficult and then speaking in English and writing in an appropriate academic standard is almost impossible. Knowing the low IELTS score (International English Language Testing System, which shows how ready a student is to study at university), with which they had been accepted in their postgraduate courses, I could see that not much could have been done to improve their language skills in a few sessions (Handa, 2007).

Even students, who did have better language skills, because of their prior experiences in a different education system, remained confused in their discourse. Many such students adopted “a ‘multivocal’ approach that fuses their native discourses with the conventions valued by the academy” (Canagarajah, 1997, cited in Canagarajah, 2002, p. 37). Their writing had ended up as a patch work of their ‘plagiphrasing’ (Biggs 2003; Wilson 2003 cited in Handa, and Power, 2005) and many were accused of plagiarising. The situation had left both the students and their teachers frustrated and annoyed. One particular student, who had completed an engineering degree from another country, announced during one of the focus group discussions, “I can never write the way my teacher (from social science discipline) wants me to write”. And a teacher said very clearly, “they need to write well and of university standard otherwise they do not get a credit” (Handa, 2004b, p. 5).

Literature Review

There seems to be a very similar thread connecting various researchers and their research proving, improving and disapproving the above issues and solutions. Many have reached a stage of disapproving the very system that produces issues for students, for academics and for institutes involved in internationalisation of HE.

It has been confirmed that most NESB international students in western institutes find the “process of teaching and learning” (Internationalisation: Some impacts on teaching and learning, 2000) difficult to follow and adopt, because the cultural and educational requirements of university courses are dictated by the dominant cultural literacy (Mackinnon & Manathunga, 2003). Issues that relate to their lack of language skills as well as their different cultural background have been thoroughly investigated by many (Ballard, 1987; Ballard and Clanchy, 1997; Ramsden 1992; Pennycook, 1998; Tootell, 1999; Flower Dew and Peacock, 2001; Biggs, 2003; Leask 2003; Hamilton, Hinton, Hawkins, 2003; Hellstên, 2005; Liu, 2005).

There have been suggestions about devising various means of improving the situation including having academic induction programs, embedding of academic literacy support and cross-cultural education for academics. Many have advocated for academic preparation programs and have claimed their effectiveness (Phillips, 1990; Ballard and Clanchy, 1991; Ball, 1999; Bretag, Horrocks & Smith, 2002; Volet, 2003).
Diagnostic tests to identify students’ language problems (Skillen, Merten, Trivett & Percy, 1999; Carroll, 2004) and providing language support to students who have language difficulties (Hawthorne, Minas, & Singh, 2004) have also been claimed to be valuable to improve the education experience of international students. However, providing additional English language support to struggling NESB international students is considered an artificial, 'technical' solution to internationalising curricula (McTaggart 2003, p. 7-8) and integrated academic support for students (Carroll, 2004) has been recommended. Dealing with issues raised by their international student population, university teachers also face many pedagogical challenges. Considering the student diversity in their classes (Ireson, Mortimore & Hallam, 1999; Rayn and Hellmundt, 2003), academics have been advised to be reflective and ready to accommodate their students’ diverse learning style by changing/adapting their own teaching style (Ballard and Clanchy, 1991; Tootell, 1999; Leask, 2005; Carroll and Ryan, 2005). Many have argued that university education should have a universal approach where both curriculum and teaching practices provide “an opportunity for every student in class to relate what is being taught to his or her lived experience” (Beasley, 1995, p. 2). However, many teachers find it easier to respond to groups of “homogeneous like-minded students” that they are familiar with (Lawrence, 2000, p.8) and some feel “ill equipped” (Ryan, 2003, cited in Handa, 2004, p. 7) to teach international students who come from diverse backgrounds. Experiences of NESB postgraduate students are especially challenging (Wu, 2002) as coming from another higher education culture to the western universities they “negotiate the path between two poles of pedagogy” (Caruna and Hanstock, 2003, p. 3) as “no account whatsoever is taken of cultural variations in conceptions of pedagogy” (Caruna and Hanstock, 2003, p. 3) in their courses.

Research on international students and their problems has therefore, reached a similar juncture that points a finger at the system rather than the victims of the system and has concluded that a more complex approach is needed. For an institute to become an internationalised institute, having international students on the campus and providing remedial language support is not enough (Kelly, 2000; Liddicoat, 2004, cited in Das, 2005; Leasks, 2003). Internationalisation of HE should not only be about the money brought by international students (Curro and McTaggart, 2003), but the social, cultural and educational implications (Leask 2003; Das, 2005) of internationalisation need to be considered.

Therefore, education institutes have been asked to review their internationalisation programs (Haigh, 2002) and implementation of an internationalised curriculum has been advocated (Yang, 2002; Volet, 2003, Biggs, 2003, Leask, 1999, Leask, 2005, Smith, 2006). A curriculum that does not “grant an equal opportunity for success to every student” that is enrolled (Haigh, 2002), is not deemed suitable for an internationalised institute. It has been argued that curriculum in a global context (Rizvi, 2000) must include both global and local context (Knight & Witt, 1997) so it is relevant to students from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds (Mackinnon & Manathunga, 2003). It should also give opportunities to students (offshore or onshore) to develop an international perspective (Leask, 1999) and opportunities to academics (teaching onshore or offshore) for professional development (Dunn and Wallace, 2004).
Literature produced on internationalisation of HE and NESB students in the last few decades has therefore also followed a path very similar to my own research. And this path also stops at the same juncture where the question about the incompatibility of these students’ prior language, knowledge and academic skills with the western curriculum offered in western universities starts to rattle.

The point of trepidation

In this era of internationalisation and borderless markets where ‘economic rationalism’ is the driving force behind most individual and national ventures, internationalisation of HE has come to serve three purposes – skilled migration, revenue generation and capacity building – and all have a strong economic drive (de Wit, 2004). Immigration and education are the only ways for people from the developing world to obtain a passage to the western world. They are prepared to pay large amounts of money for these opportunities. In the same vein, rising as icons of academic capitalism, many western universities are making use of internationalisation of HE “to compensate for diminished government revenues” (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997, p. 8) and are recruiting international students for their own benefits (Marginson, 2005). In a bid to become internationalised, they have let go of the very goal of internationalisation of HE which is to bring an international dimension to their teaching and learning practices (Knight, 1999) and not only to bring in international students. International students’ presence does increase the cultural diversity of a university campus, however, whether that diversity is celebrated (Handa, 2004b) and included into the teaching and learning practices of the institute, is being questioned (Leask 2003; McTaggart, 2003; Das, 2005). Questions have been posed whether degrees given in these institutes are even suitable for an international cohort (Das, 2005).

In their endeavour to capture their full-fee paying clients many universities have also let their guard down and students, who are neither suitable nor ready for a postgraduate degree are being allowed in. Even an IELTS score of 7, which is the entrance score for most university courses in Australia (Feast, 2002), means that the student “has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations” (Field, 2005). Therefore when international students are allowed into a postgraduate course with a score even lower than 7, they can not be blamed for their “deficit”. Moreover, IELTS is a competency based test where students get ticks for achieving certain competencies in the four macro-skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. University study is not about ticking off what the students can do but it is about the demonstration of their knowledge and academic literacy development. Unfortunately, for many postgraduate students who come only for one year to study in Australia, there is not enough time to develop their critical literacy skills which local students might have developed during their undergraduate study.

Also achieving academic literacy in a second language is a hard skill to master (Braine, 2002; Handa; 2003). However, NESB students who do make efforts in this direction are not applauded. They rather face censure from their classmates and their teachers, especially those who according to Hall “…are typically monolingual (ourselves,)” and “often very sharp in (our) criticism of overseas students whose English is below the standard expected for their academic tasks’ (1996, n.p.).
curriculum being offered in most courses is ingrained in western ways and is usually designed to be implemented in a western context. Collective cultural knowledge, local context and English language, which are the foundations of a western curriculum, all marginalise NESB international students. Their prior knowledge, education experiences and skills gained in their Asian country suffer an “epistemological exclusion” (Appadurai, 2001, p. 2) in the “Eurocentric Enlightenment culture of the western academic world” (Brookfield, 1995, p.89). Similarly, the classroom practices are also particularly entrenched in the western way of presenting different points of view simultaneously, and encourage debate and discussion, which again require language skills and cultural knowledge to participate confidently. Especially in social sciences, where complex issues are discussed and various answers are sought, where no answer is right or wrong, NESB international students might lack appropriate level of language to understand the nuances of academic discourse.

NESB international students, in comparison to native speakers, also take much longer to read any given academic text (Reid, Kirkpatrick & Mulligan, 1998). Their lack of vocabulary and understanding of English expressions and metaphors used in a particular cultural context can hinder them reading between the lines. In addition, because of their language limitations they cannot show their critical thinking skills in their writing. Especially in essays, where students need to produce an engaged argument, NESB students have their limitations. Many of these students are also reluctant to participate in an argumentative discourse because of their cultural background, which teaches them reverence, and respect and not criticism and questioning of received wisdom (Chanock, forthcoming). Moreover, as the so called gatekeepers of standard English and proponents of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) state “language proficiency in the academic context is as important as content” (Turner, 2004), students without good language skills cannot “engage with the academy” (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 41). Naturally, in this system that rewards a native speaker of English (Haigh, 2002), a non-native speaker is “less likely to engage the interest and respect of lecturers” (Chanock, forthcoming). These language and cultural barriers naturally leave students “paralyzed or confused” (Canagarajah, 2002), making their academic adjustment difficult if not impossible.

Suggestions and solutions

Internationalisation of HE is now an established feature of most western universities. But large numbers of international students on their campuses, sometimes, are an only expression of this internationalisation. For an over all internationalisation of these institutes, these World Englishes Speaking groups of international students should have an impact, which is much deeper. A transformation, a university-wide move towards internationalisation is required, which involves “teaching, research and service functions …” (Knight and de Wit, 1997, p. 8) and most of all, the curriculum (Volet and Ang, 1998) offered in them. As “curriculum implies the educational relationships envisaged among teachers and learners,” (Curro and McTaggart, 2003, p. 1), teaching practices (Hellmundt, Rifkin and Fox 1998) are the first place to make these changes. For students, teachers are the face and voice of curriculum, teaching practices therefore are very “significant in facilitating their learning” (Kettle, 2007, n.p.), and can direct their engagement with the course. Hence, it is crucial that teachers remain tuned in to their diverse students’ needs (Biggs, 2003) and ensure that
these students engage with their academic environment by adopting quality teaching and innovative and inclusive practices.

However, a curriculum is not only the teaching plans and practices put together. It is the complete framework of the discipline specific knowledge outcomes leading students towards graduate attributes. It is a complex phenomenon as it is abstract and philosophical as well as practical and tangible. It requires both theoretical and practical perspectives. Once every one has a clear understanding of what a curriculum actually is (Fraser, 2006), it is important that curriculum designers and teachers work together. Teachers’ practical knowledge can bring innovations in altering the focus of the course (Das, 2005), to suit a diverse cohort. “When considering internationalisation of the curriculum”, as academics have themselves claimed, “what is taught should not be separated from how it is taught” (Bell, 2004, p. 12), therefore, I call upon teachers to be involved in the process for improving the quality of teaching in universities and in research and design of this curriculum, bringing their expertise along in deciding what can be changed/added/reformed/transformed, whether in teaching or in course designs.

Innovations in classroom practices and in designing assessments are to be found. Strategies for engaging and extending the full potential of international students by exploring the ‘fit’ between educational strategies and the possibilities for maximising their potential to succeed in this context are to be devised. Activities that help students develop and progress in academic literacy should be created. Some assessments should be included to give NESB students a chance to utilise their prior learning and experiences. Encouraging international students to talk and write about what they have brought with them may help their academics to know their alien students better, as well as having their voices heard may also “empower” the students.

Opportunities for international students to utilise and share the “funds of knowledge” and the resources available to them, to build new knowledge with their local counterparts, should be created so they all “function in an international and intercultural context’ (Knight & de Wit, 1995, p.13). As “exposure to different ideas and cultures” (Hamilton, 1998, p. 2), can have a positive impact on Australian students too, there should be more incentive for and instances of local and international students interacting with each other. This interaction can benefit both parties by ‘fostering global understanding and developing skills for effective living and working in a diverse world' (Francis, 1993, p. 4) in them.

There is also a need for a change in attitude towards speakers of World Englishes, so language does not act as a barrier but functions as a channel of communication in educational settings. A variety of Englishes are spoken and used in different countries (Kachru, 1992; Kachru, Kachru, & Nelson, 2006; Pennycook, 1994; Canagarajah, 1999; Seidhlofer, 2004; Martin, 2007), and each is respected in international business and other global dealings. Similarly, in an international atmosphere, teachers and local students should be encouraged to develop a more tolerant and welcoming approach towards NESB international students by appreciating what they say and not berating them how they say it. Because as Ammon (2000) declares “insistence on native-speaker norms acts as a powerful gate-keeping device which has little to do with intelligibility but a great deal with socio-economic factors” (cited in Seidhlofer, 2002, p. 269). If NESB or WES students are continuously assessed on their English
language competency, they cannot be tested for their content knowledge. Teachers should evaluate students’ writing mainly for content, disregarding their errors, especially if they do not “interfere with communication in the academic context” (Stalker, 1997, p. 7).

Therefore, “a new notion of communicative competence is needed, one which recognizes English as a world language” (Alpetkin, 2002, p. 57) which is not the monopoly of native speakers only. If English is the language of internationalisation then internationalised English language (English as Lingua Franca) for academic purposes is to be formed. I would also propose that a way of balancing it out for all students needs to be found so all students have to have a similar handicap to play equally in this field.

However, on a practical note, a tighter recruitment system overseas, and more counseling about choosing courses should be implemented. A clear picture of what is expected in a particular course needs to be put upfront and international students instead of being encouraged to take on accelerated versions of postgraduate courses should be discouraged to do so. Students who are admitted in postgraduate courses need to be tested for their language and content knowledge (even if there are no prerequisites). Efforts should be made to create programs where at least six extra months are added to a twelve-month degree, for international students to catch up on their content knowledge and to develop appropriate critical literacy. Learning Guides for each degree should be developed for international students, to guide them about what to learn and how to learn. Samples of written work expected in their courses should be included in these guides to introduce students to the literacy demands of the course before hand. In many of these ventures, Learning Advisors and discipline specific academics can work together.

Conclusion

In the present era of “globalisation, mass migration and mediation” (Appadurai, 1996, P. 16), among other things, higher education has certainly advanced the process of internationalising the world. Now it is time to advance in the direction of "universalism of learning: the universal-university world" (Clark Kerr, 1994, 9, cited in de Wit, 2004), and internationalisation in the real sense and this means not stopping at only having international students (on shore or off shore) but “taking on a genuinely global view of academic issues, and fully integrating domestic and overseas students and faculty” (Eastwood, cited in Baker, 2007). It is time to balance the benefits and challenges between international and local students, their academics and those educational institutes that claim to be internationalised. What is required is an international perspective in the HE curriculum and a change in the philosophy of teachers and students to make it possible for ‘all’ to be internationalised.

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