WHI07009Internationalising the Content of Higher Education

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Abstract.
Internationalisation of higher education is a current theme in research and politics of higher education. The theme in this paper is related to present developments and concerns of the growing border-crossing activities that take place between nations and their systems of Higher Education. Higher education is expected to be grounded in research, research to be an international activity, and the universities to have an international orientation also in their education of students. The dominant discourse on internationalisation of higher education in research and research based discussions have up till now mainly been from political, economic and organisational perspectives. There is also a tendency to place internationalisation within the frame of globalisation and the increasing trade in educational services worldwide. We do not dispute that this research is helpful to clarify some main political and economic conditions for and ways of organising higher education. However, the research does not give much basis for internationalising the teaching and learning and development of scholarship. There is lack of development of internationalisation in higher education when it comes to teaching and learning intercultural knowledge and competencies, and development of scholarship. There is a need of addressing questions about the internationalising of the content of education. Both at national and institutional levels, in many countries, internationalisation is stated to be an educational goal, sometimes discussed as a homogenization process, sometimes emphasizing a pluralistic process, multiculturalism and multilingualism. In some previous studies we have found that the didactical realisation of internationalisation as an educational goal is very elusive. The concrete content considered to represent internationalisation seems to be rather haphazardly included in teaching and learning. There is also a tendency to look at what is considered to be general knowledge and general human qualities as what represents internationalisation without considering cultural differences. In higher education there is no institutionalised educational and didactic thinking as a basis for developing internationalisation of the education. The concrete thinking is very much restricted to organisational and administrative aspects of the education. The thinking about educational content and learning outcomes is much idealised and general and not developed into clarifying and useful specifications. In this paper we present and discuss some conditions for an educational didactic framework and approach to internationalisation of higher education.

1. Internationalisation and globalisation

Internationalisation of higher education is related to globalisation, which includes politically and market regulated flows of people, money, goods and services. There is an increased integration of political and economic systems in the world (Waks, 2003). Internationalisation of higher education may be looked upon in many different ways. It may be seen as a matter of fact that is interesting to describe and explain, mainly in relation to the increased globalisation and mobility of people, money, goods and services. This is the main orientation of research on internationalisation of higher education focusing on political, economic and organisational
aspects. Within this placing of the phenomenon in relation to globalisation it is also common to be rather normative seeing internationalisation of higher education as something necessary and good. This way of looking at and dealing with internationalisation may be used without relation to the educational character of higher education. However one may also want to deepen the understanding of those processes by relating them to the educational character of the activities of higher education, but still with a main interest in the political, economic and organisational aspects of internationalisation. A reason for doing so would be the assumption that how internationalisation of higher education is actually taking place is dependent on its educational character.

There is also a flow of political, economic and organisational ideas and models forming part of the globalisation. Those ideas represent a cultural flow and exchange between countries and parts of the world (Peters & Marshall, 1996). This flow and its consequences are not restricted to the realisation of identical ideas and models in new places but include new local creations dependent on and related to the flow. This development and these flows also concern the character, aims and activities of higher education and represent conditions for the development of higher education as parts of society (Waters, 2001). Flows of people, money, products and ideas represent external conditions influencing the organisation of higher education and forms of activity included and developed in higher education. However, there are also cultural flows and exchanges that represent educational content which also is the focussed issue in this article. The interesting educational question does not stay with those flows as such, but concerns what they mean in terms of intercultural meetings and cultural content in education and how this is managed (Svensson, 1998; Wihlborg, 2005). Our position is that pedagogical quality assurance of internationalising the content of Higher Education demands an awareness of intercultural meetings in educational contexts.

When internationalisation is seen as a goal in higher education this goal could be restricted to political, economic and organisational aspects. This would rather much boil down to increased mobility between higher education systems and indirectly between labour markets and societies and political and economic consequences of increased mobility. Then different measures taken may be evaluated mainly in terms of increased mobility. However, both the mobility and its consequences may be dependent on the educational content and the consequences certainly are also social and educational in addition to political and economic. There are also social and educational consequences in addition to those directly related to mobility. However, what the educational goals and consequences of internationalising higher education is quite unclear and rather implicitly assumed and taken for granted than explicitly formulated. We argue that developers of higher education should consider internationalisation from a pedagogical perspective. We find this to be of great necessity in order to complete the picture when it comes to developing internationalisation in higher education.

Intercultural knowledge and experiences must become a part of teaching and learning and conditions for an educational and didactical framework that underpin this development is called for (Svensson & Wihlborg 2007). The aim of and the contribution we want to make with this paper concerns a development of an educational didactic view of and approach to internationalisation in higher education. Intercultural qualities of learning outcomes in terms of competencies and capabilities (Bowden 2004) and scholarship (Cohen, 1997; Barnett, 2005) have to be identified and addressed. Our endeavour should be seen as one aiming at counteracting and complementing the escalation of an economically driven demand for instrumental education, where the outcomes, as pointed out in Stromquists (2002) discussion.
abut education in a globalized world, are tied to goals mainly of production, productivity and employment (ibid. p. 105).

The force of globalisation is fundamentally economic and transnational cooperations (TNC)\(^1\) are central. A force that is working as a social process that transcends national boarders which also is impacting on higher education mainly in terms of ‘market competition’. Universities are more and more expected to operate in a knowledge-based economy. Other factors are that of new communication technologies, and a neo-liberal political development towards reduction in state funding demanding universities to become more self-supporting in their existence (Stromquist, 2002). We agree with Yang, (2002) that the term/concept globalisation is linked to the Western colonisation and dominance and historically burdened. In line with Yang’s (2002) arguing we also think it is important to differentiate between the meaning of globalization and internationalization of education.

The starting point here is that internationalisation of higher education concerns educational activities. Our concern is then with learning, development of curricula objectives about intercultural knowledge and learning opportunities in line with those objectives. What is particularly interesting are cultural flows that are transcending boarders and which opens up for a deeper understanding between cultures. Yang (2002), referring to Pennycook (1996) put the question in this way “should we perhaps look at universities as a key site of struggle, where local knowledge meets global knowledge in a battle to represent different worlds in different ways?” (ibid, p. 85), and Yang (2002) maintains that;

> “the rationale for internationalisation lies in an understanding of the universal nature of the advancement of knowledge. While knowledge is of the contextual, the advancement of human knowledge that is based on common bonds of humanity is arguable a global enterprise. Universities are, therefore, by nature of their commitment to advancing human knowledge, international institutions.” (ibid. p. 85).

2. Some previous empirical studies of internationalisation of education

In higher education in Sweden, as in other parts of Europe, we have seen recent government bills and national policies for internationalisation of higher education, especially since the mid nineties (Van der Wende, M. (1996), Kålsvemark & Van der Wende (1997), Kålsvemark (1999) and Knight (1999)). All emphasise intentions objectives and curricula development that will influence that higher education institutions should make further “efforts so as to enhance the quality of their education and promote understanding of other countries and of international conditions and relations” (The Ministry of Education, Research and Culture, 2004/05:162, p 1). Annerblom (2002) in an evaluation report, *Internationalisation of higher education in Sweden*, published by the Swedish Council for the Renewal of Higher Education, discusses the importance of maintaining a long-term effect by the exchange programs that are in use, and emphasises the following up of the experiences in learning and educational contexts from the exchanges.

In order to understand the phenomenon of internationalisation of higher education from a pedagogical perspective, the present authors raised questions about how the intentions of internationalisation of higher educations were realised. There seemed to be a need for to

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\(^{1}\) Transnational corporations, as a global economic force of power, are defined as various firms, services, manufactures or industries situated with one or more product units abroad (Mucchielli, 1998).
conduct and investigate the issue using a qualitative approach. Some empirical studies of the nurse education in Sweden were conducted between 2000 and 2005, aiming at describing the phenomenon of internationalization as experienced by teachers and students. The nurse education within higher education was chosen as an example where intentions of internationalization have been emphasized over a long time (HsV 1998:16R; SFS 1992:1434; SFS 1993:100; Jarvis, 1996). It is an education well suited for discussions about universal human conditions, cultural differences and intercultural relations important as parts of the education content and resulting capabilities. Both interviews with students and teachers and a survey study with teachers were carried out and data were analyzed using a qualitative approach (Marton 1986 and Svensson 1997), with the support of the computer programs HyperQual and NVivo (Richards, 2000). This article draws on the results of these interviews with students and teachers as well as the survey study with teachers (Wihlborg, 1999 [study I], 2004a [study II], 2004b [study III]; Wihlborg, 2005; Svensson & Wihlborg, 2007 [study IV]).

In all the studies (I-IV) four main areas of internationalization were identified concerning what was the content of internationalization according to descriptions given by the participants. These dimensions were discussed against the backdrop of the current curricula objectives and policy documents for higher education in general (in Sweden) and specifically for the Swedish nurse education (SFS 1993:100; Jarvis, 1996). Two areas were seen as being primarily of organizational character (exchange programs and similarities/differences between countries in formalities of HE); two areas were seen as being of educational content character. The latter are, (concerning the nurse education) medical and technical and respectively intercultural educational content. Each area is constituted by and contains several crucial aspects of importance. The general idea of each dimension is described below.

**Similarities and differences in formalities** (between countries). Internationalization is experienced from an organizational perspective, and what is focused is if it is an internationally valid nurse education, competitive (status wise) compared to other countries nurse education. There is a focus on comparison between countries of various rules, credit systems and curricula objectives. This area is of a general kind, since we can assume that it concerns all educations even though different educations focus on different objectives.

**Exchanges** (between countries) of students and teachers. Internationalization is seen from an organizational perspective focusing increasing possibilities of exchange in general, including possibilities for students and teachers to participate in exchange programmes. It is also experienced as increasing possibilities to compete about jobs and to be able to live and work as a nurse abroad, to become mobile in an international market. This area is also of a general kind, in the sense that ‘rules and conditions’ are focused as they are also described in guidelines for higher education in Sweden and for collaboration with other countries. This area has very little connection to educational content, rather the idea is that knowledge will be developed no matter how and no matter what content the student will encounter for instance by participating in an exchange program.

**Medical and technical knowledge** as the basis for an internationally valid Swedish nurse education, involving medical-technical competence and nursing capabilities. The emphasis is

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2 The Bologna Declaration and the new ECTS (European Community Course-Credit Transfer System) had not been completed when the analysis of the fourth empirical studies was in its final. Lifelong learning and the Bologna Declaration see [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna.pdf) Date:29/05/2007 and [www.bologna-bergen2005.no](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no) Date:29/05/2007
on that nurse students, when having accomplished the goal to become a qualified nurse, have become technically qualified, leading to good abilities to handle technical equipments important in medical service contexts.

**Intercultural knowledge** as a basis for an internationally valid nurse education. The focus is on intercultural issues and a vision of a development of intercultural competencies as part of desirable nursing capabilities, combined with the idea that the opening up of boundaries between countries, and an increased flow of people and culture between countries, promotes intercultural competencies. The education as a whole, that is, when having accomplished the goal to become a qualified nurse, is wished for to involve a development of capabilities and abilities of an intercultural character, leading to good qualifications for practical work.

These two areas characterized as concerning educational content, of course differs between subject matter fields. Still, we will argue that competencies and capabilities of an intercultural character, per se, as parts of learning are important features in higher education generally, across different educational content and qualifications and needs to be brought to the fore in various educational contexts. The nature of these competencies apparently have two sides, content of a specific character (for instance knowledge of a specific custom) and content of a more general character (for instance an open mind to cultural differences).

The medical and technical knowledge and some general qualities of interpersonal relations seen as intercultural knowledge, which are seen as desirable as content and outcome of education, are expected to be similar across cultures. When it comes to the medical technical knowledge the idea seems to be that what is aimed for is rather advanced medical and technical knowledge and this knowledge is assumed to be the same and not culture specific or may be rather to be representing its own taken for granted culture. When it comes to general qualities of interpersonal relations those are at the same time seen as important to nursing in general. It is qualities like not being prejudiced, being open to different views and customs, being willing and able to take others perspectives, listen, be respectful, and so. Those qualities are thought of as general attitudes and capabilities not tied to specific contents and situations but manifested in relation to varying situations and contents. These competencies can be discussed in relation to developing excellence in nursing education (Allen & Ogilvie, 2004; Holt et al., 2002, Wihlborg, 2005). Whether students’ preparations involve that she/he is culturally competent and will be able to work and live in an internationalized/global world can be further problematised in relation to becoming and being a world citizen, Cogan & Derricott (1998) and Dahlin (2004) and Lapiner, (2004).

Within the area of intercultural knowledge the teachers and students are also including the meeting with and knowledge of situations and content that is different from the own culture. However, there is no emphasis on specific knowledge of other cultures as an aim, content and result of the education. What specific content that is included in the education seems rather accidental and the idea seems to be that it is mainly a means to develop general intercultural or even inter-human competence, where the specific content is a means rather than an end. This does not totally exclude that the specific content and knowledge is important in specific cases. Thus what has here been named intercultural knowledge is very much seen as a matter of development of general qualities of relating to other humans that are especially demanded and trained in intercultural meetings.

The content that represents aspects of internationalisation in teaching and learning situations in the nurse education is not underpinned by curricula rationales. And in addition there is no-
shared educational culture of teaching and learning concerned with internationalization. Altogether, this means that internationalization is a rather haphazardly constituted process in the nurse education.

In the previous empirical studies, referred to above, the ideas among students and teachers about formalities, exchange and also medical and technical knowledge concern quite distinct and concrete things, while the ideas about intercultural knowledge and competencies are rather abstract, vague and elusive. At the same time, and somehow paradoxical, it is to a large extent those qualities of intercultural knowledge that is expected to be the benefit of harmonizing the formalities and of the exchanges between countries. There is a main difference in the content thought about between knowledge that is thought to be general across cultures and knowledge about cultural differences and what is specific to different cultures.

3. Internationalising educational content

The results referred to above showed that the participants did not share a mutual understanding of the phenomenon of internationalization or a curriculum meaning of internationalisation. They showed that there was a lack of pedagogical/didactical theoretical awareness and approach. This in turn, we will argue, leads to consequences for students in teaching and learning situations and in terms of students’ learning outcome(s). Internationalisation in higher education is vague and ambiguous. The internationalisation of higher education is to a large extent accidental rather than clearly intended when it comes to educational content. How to realize the intentions of internationalising higher education in terms of teaching and learning, focusing on the epistemological dimension, seems therefore to be a legitimate and important question to raise.

3.1. Learning environments and learning contexts

Education is, at the level of organising activities of students and teachers, a matter of creating learning environments. There may be more or less awareness of, knowledge of, and control over the environments created for the students. Administrators, teachers and students are involved in different ways in the creation of those environments. The creation of learning environments is both a genuine creation, as when students and teachers do something together, and a creation of access to already existing facilities like a university site with its departments, libraries etc. Much of what is called internationalisation in higher education has the character of giving access to new learning environments, which are considered to be more international in some respect. The most obvious form of this kind of internationalisation in Sweden is exchange programmes for students and teachers (Annerblom, 2002).

What is done through giving access to learning environments is giving affordances, opportunities for learning. What is the more specific content of these affordances, material and human resources, is often not very well known in the educational system. Also, the environments are external to the learner and do not represent what is the context of the learning actually taking place. The context of the actual learning taking place is the parts of the external environment, the resources and possibilities, actually used in learning, which is forming the situational part of the learning context, directly related to the learning. What is used of course depends on what is afforded but also on the learner. The learning also depends on how the resources are used. The learning context also includes what the student uses from
his/her previous experience and knowledge in the learning. An intercultural learning environment is expected to involve intercultural meetings, based on cultural flows. However, intercultural learning is dependent on the learners use of these meetings based on his her intentions and previous experiences.

The development of more international learning environments and learning contexts is expected to lead to valued and wanted learning outcomes. Students’ meetings with learning environments of course involve learning about specific places, people, customs etc. This seems not to be emphasized as the main learning outcomes but is looked upon as means to deeper insights that will become a part of the experience (of residing in other cultural environments). What tend to be focused are very general values and attitudes expressed in acting in intercultural situations and other situations. The question is then, what content, in any learning environment within higher education, will support a student learning outcome that can be recognised as intercultural competencies, in a general sense and in relation to a future profession and working field (Wihlborg, 2005).

There is a general problem of creating learning environments, steering cultural flows, making certain cultural flows and cultural meetings possible, and thereby attaining certain learning outcomes rather than others. This is the problem of what culture is chosen and why. This may be seen as a question of knowledge and power and this is related to a struggle for cultural recognition. In USA this struggle has been very explicit (Marginson & Rhodes, 2002; Marginson, 2004; Mestenhauser, 1998; Knight, 1999, Knight & Wit, 1999; Reading, 1996; Urry, 2005). In the internationalising of the content of any education there is a choice of cultural elements that are made accessible. The problematic nature of this choice is often not made explicit and discussed.

Svensson (1998) says “to deal with the flow of culture, there is a need for a meaning of culture, that is focusing more on the elements of culture, their constitution, nature and relations” (p. 15) and raises the question;

How do people learn form another culture? By learn we mean how they change their externalizations of meaning in relation to externalizations coming form another culture. Although we do not see this change as mainly a matter of acquiring or reproducing the given externalization, the relation to the given is fundamental to the understanding of the change together with the reaction to one’s own context of experience and tradition. (Svensson, 1998, p. 127).

Svensson (1998) also says that “the combination of a focus on cultural elements and cultural flows is fundamental to an educational perspective and an educational perspective is fundamental to a deeper understanding of the creation and flow of cultural units” (p. 19).

3.2. Language and development of knowledge

One very central issue concerning cultural flows in higher education is the language issue. There are two main aspects of this issue: language as content of education and language as medium of education. There is a problematic relation between internationalisation and knowledge of language. If internationalisation is seen as part of globalisation, internationalisation would probably be contrary to multilingualism. Historically most integrations of societies into larger nations, regions and empires seem to be based on language hegemony rather than multilingualism. The present globalisation is paralleled by an increasing hegemony of the English language. More and more people learn and use the
English language and this has been part of the development within higher education in most not English speaking countries for many years now. This development represents an internationalisation of the content of higher education studies but in a somewhat one-sided and restricted sense when it comes to cultural flows compared to possible flows. However there is also an increase of the study of other foreign languages, mainly languages talked by rather many people.

Language plays an important role in internationalisation of knowledge content in higher education where language is a medium of expressing and communicating knowledge. The question then becomes one about the use of language as a condition for students’ development of individual knowledge. A critical aspect of this question concerns access. Both in what language there is access to certain knowledge and how students can access knowledge and develop personal knowledge depending on their access to or mastering of language.

Cultural influences and languages are important in the constitution of meaning and understanding, and in learning contexts, in relation to development of knowledge. The possibilities accessible in sense making for the individual(s) need to be identified and compared between contexts. This is also a question that can be extended and referred to democracy. The learners’ access to learning contexts that include intercultural variation in meanings and understandings is crucial. Such access opens up for cultural influences of various kinds in relation to citizenship development involving competence related to the learners’ future profession and field of work as well as in a more general sense.

3.3. Conditions for internationalising subject matter content

It is our suggestion that a more active facilitation of internationalisation that is not limited to some formal and organisational changes will need a more developed idea of relevant and prioritised content based on aimed at learning outcomes. The character of the aimed at and expected learning outcome would have to be more clearly delimited. It should be acknowledged that outcomes are not culturally neutral and that they have to be argued for in relation to a multicultural context. It should also be recognised that the learning outcome is dependent on the learners’ activity and way of approaching and using the affordances given through the learning environment. Here we have to realise that the learning outcome is dependent on an attitude and approach by the learner that make possible the cultural understanding and competencies aimed at. If that is not the case it is those values, attitudes and approaches that have to be addressed in education.

We also have to look more carefully at what is afforded through the external learning environment and if the affordances give possibility to learn what is aimed for. When the external environment and/or the learning context include cultural conflicts this needs to become part of and addressed in education. The development of knowledge need to be understood in terms of that the activity of the learner decides the context of learning in relation to the affordances of the learning environment, and in terms of the cultural and meaning making character of the activity. Internationalisation of education may be understood in terms of the pattern of the content of all the components of the educational process. Policies concerning educational aims and goals as well as organisational, administrative and economic changes and use of resources would benefit from being more based on an understanding of the educational processes.
Within the frame of exchange programs there is usually communication between the instructors in the two countries about the courses taken by the students, their knowledge content and how they may be incorporated in an exam. The incorporation of courses from other countries and cultures may mean an increased cultural variation and in this sense a kind of internationalisation and intercultural knowledge. However, what tend to be focussed is the knowledge content as such and not its intercultural qualities. At the same time the exchanges are assumed and experienced to contribute to intercultural knowledge. Also, there is an increasing intercultural content of education also for students not involved in exchanges. There is an aim of international and intercultural understanding in all different fields of education assumed to be a result of mobility but also of development of the educational content at home. However there seems to be a lack of a theoretical thinking about internationalisation as part of curriculum and the dealing with subject matter in higher education. Internationalisation in this sense will involve a broad view of subject matter and a holistic view of the curriculum and the education.

4. Towards a pedagogical dimension in internationalizing higher education

Waters (2001) discusses the path of globalization through time and its influences in social sciences from the 16th to the 19th centuries. He discusses “three arenas through which globalizing processes take effect, the economy, the polity and culture” (Waters 2001, p. 22) and points to the global idealization and reflexive individuation of today. He maintains that “the new world chaos” equals “globalizing cultures” (Waters 2001, p. 182), and says;

…as material interdependence increases and as political sovereignty is whittled away, trans-national, inter-societal connections eventually become more dense and important than national, intra-social ones. The central features of this acceleration are compression of time and its elimination of space, and an emerging reflexivity or self-conscious intentionality with respect to the globalization process (Waters, 2001, p.182).

Intercultural learning involves learning about social phenomena which could also include global changes and involve a flow of understandings between people. This will open up for the possibility for developing a global/international consciousness and support global/international citizenship capabilities and competencies. Robertson (1992, 1998) and Waters (2001) discuss a form of emergent holistic consciousness. On a global level, this would involve cultures being connected to a complex collective whole, a form of collective consciousness. Intercultural learning would be in the form of transnational meaning, understanding and experience.

As stated by Svensson (referring to Hannerz, 1992), “culture is based on creation of meaning” (Svensson, 1998, p. 124). Svensson raises questions concerned with the meaning of culture and the nature of cultural changes and says that “transnational cultural flows represent conditions for the flows between cultures and flows between cultures mean cultural change. “The flow and the change have their basis in the cultural nature of man” (Svensson, 1998, p.122). Svensson discusses education as flows between cultural contexts and the relation between cultural elements and says that:

“Cultural changes dependent on transnational cultural flows are here seen as a matter of how externalizations of meaning within one culture are dependent on externalization of meaning within another culture. This kind of dependence and influence is only a special case of relations between externalizations of meaning. The character of such relations is a
main preoccupation within education as a discipline, although they are not usually referred to in those general terms.” (Svensson, 1998, p. 124.)

Until now the concern with the internationalization of higher education has been, as stated in this paper, from an organisational/system level perspective, closely linked with economical-political-policy demands and presumptions and assumptions of various kinds (Adler, 1997; Chaffee & Jacobson, 1997; Sporn, 1996, among others). What have been discussed are universities in relation to an external global environment. Bartell (2003) for instance claims that over the two last decades worldwide, universities have “come under increasing pressures to adapt to rapidly changing social, technological, economic and political forces emanating from immediate as well as from broader post-industrial external environment” (Bartell, 2003, p. 43). There has also been a focus on academic and organisational climates and cultures in higher education, a focus that also belongs to an organizational perspective and is linked to economy, politics and policy (Peterson & Spencer, 1990; Austin, 1990; Rhoads & Tierney, 1990). Very few, if any investigations, have been carried out concerning the experience of aspects of internationalization as interpreted by students and teachers in terms of and in relation to teaching and learning situations, that is, based on how intentions of internationalization in higher education is carried out in praxis. This is a perspective that, unlike what has been done in most research, makes the meanings and understandings of students and teachers come to the fore. Also research that concerns and develops a didactical and pedagogical dimension concerning what to learn (educational content) and how to learn (approaches to teaching and learning) as aspects of internationalization are missing perspective. There is a need of a development of a shared culture and curriculum including an understanding of internationalisation (Svensson & Wihlborg, 2007). The results from the investigations referred to in this paper revealed institutional and cultural constraints but they also point at conditions for change and the need for a curriculum theory as a condition for change (ibid.).

Barnett’s (2004) wonders “how might we understand ‘the university’ and can H E be any longer taken to offer a liberal education?” (Barnett, 2004, p. 71). The universities and their new universal purpose according to Barnett must deal with the issue for to “compounding our conceptual turmoil, enabling us internally (ontologically) to handle the uncertain state of being” (Barnett, 2004, p. 72). If one agrees on this and living in an age of supercomplexity, (Barnett 2000), our suggestion is, that the discourse concerned with teaching, learning and qualities of internationalization in higher education, should involve a pedagogical/didactical dimension. What educational content and qualities should be developed as part of internationalization/globalization of higher education calls for immediate and further elaboration and research.

Globalization and the need for curricula change will become the great challenge in higher education worldwide in the decades to come, a change that many other authors also mention as important (Wells et al., 1998; Urry, 2005; Mesterhauser, 1998). What is called for is a curriculum theory involving rationales for internationalised teaching and learning and changes in scholarly approach. A didactical approach to internationalization is important for several reasons. The main reason is that the practice would be able to critically reflect on what is meant by internationalized teaching and learning, and for what reasons and by what claims concrete interpretations of curricular objectives of internationalization are made. How students learn and why the knowledge achieved is of importance, would then become open to reflect on, and in turn, open up for the possibility to problematise what features to change or support and promote in praxis.
Our conclusion is that, though internationalization of higher education is highly emphasized by writers in the educational sphere, no discourse has yet been established investigating the phenomenon from a pedagogical/didactical stance, or by describing the phenomenon in didactical terms involving teachers ways of ‘handling teaching and learning’ of aspects of internationalization in praxis, and an understanding of the phenomenon in relation to curricular objectives stated for higher education. We argue that this is one of the important pedagogical challenges for the 21st century.

We end this presentation by suggesting some main characteristics of an educational/didactical approach to the understanding of internationalization. We suggest that the concept of learning environment is very important because internationalization in relation to globalization in an educational perspective entails a widening of the environmental opportunities for learning. Here it is important to consider variation in access in an external way but also that what becomes the learning environment to the individual learner is dependent on what is used by the learner and that the learning context also includes the learner’s experience and capabilities. The language issue is here of a special relevance since the language of communication both represents and opportunity for learning and a limitation of opportunities for learning in varying degrees for different learners. From a didactical point of view conscious decisions should be taken in relation to global, regional and local conditions and democratically based aims of education.

The same could be said about internationalizing the subject matter content of higher education. In the empirical studies referred to above, four main areas of internationalization were found: similarities and differences in formalities of educational systems, exchanges of students and teachers, medical/technical knowledge and intercultural knowledge. A main challenge to educational and didactic thinking and theory development concerns how the two first areas, formalities and exchanges, are related to different effects and to the two other areas identified, medical/technical and intercultural knowledge, and also how these latter areas, medical/technical and intercultural knowledge, are related to each other. It is this kind of knowledge that can give a basis for internationalizing higher education in more than a adaptive way in relation to globalization and/or than more as a wishful policy.

References


