Internationalisation at home (IaH) and students in Education

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Background Research project

Internationalising Higher Education: Challenges and opportunities for Universities and academics in Sweden

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Project research questions

- What are the key policies and strategies around internationalisation of higher education in Sweden?

- How do different higher education institutions and faculties interpret and respond to internationalisation?

- What are the experiences of international and national mobile academics in universities in Sweden, and how do these reflect the institutional and national discourses on academic mobility?

- How do non-mobile students experience internationalisation at home, and how does this differ by disciplinary background?

Aim and focus of presentation

Our aim is to describe and analyse the experiences of IaH from the perspective of students in education programs, and to understand the contexts and conditions necessary for such expiences to be enriched.

Our key questions:

How do students understand and experience IaH and its relevance in their studies and future work? How does their disciplinary background affect IaH? What is necessary for integrating internationalisation into teacher education programs?

Core concepts

Internationalisation at home refers to the integration of intercultural and international dimensions into the experiences and curricula of all students for the duration of their studies (Beelen & Jones, 2015). It entails

An internationalised curriculum - involves knowledge about nations and cultures, use of other languages, the development of critical thinking, a global mindset and democratic citizenship (Lilley Barker, & Harris, 2015; Pavlin et al. 2013)

A culturally sensitive pedagogy – in learning environments where intercultural learning is inherent to educational institutions, and where the otherness of students is a source of learning (Crowther et al., 2000; Peacock & Harrison, 2009)

Interculturality & diversity seen as 'a resource' – Recognition of the dynamic nature of culture whereby students transcend cultural boundaries by drawing on multiple ethnic, social, cultural and political affiliations (Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2016)

Data

- Interviews with students (in ECEC and SYV) in two large Swedish universities

- Interviews with staff involved in internationalisation matters, the management of teacher education at faculty levels, and department course directors

- Documentary analysis of (a) national legislation on HE and education-specific program goals; (b) the two core internationalisation strategies (Gov bill 2004/5:162, and SOU 2018:3)

- Institutional program plans and sequencing of teaching modules in the two programs in each University

Data analysis

We followed a combination of an inductive approach to thematic coding and deconstructing of individual interviews, with a re-constructing of more abstract conceptualisations that captured the meaning of the interviews (Alexiadou, 2001). More specifically, the analysis included three main steps.

- creation of first-order invivo coding

- production of second-order themes that represent a building up of more abstract conceptualisations

- themes reviewed in relation to the research questions and key insights from the literature, which facilitated the emergence of higher-level aggregate categories (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012)

Example from analysis following

1st order codes

| | 2nd order themes | Aggregated dimensions |

1st order codes

- Courses support comparison of different cultures and countries' educational systems
- International thinking is supported by courses' activities
- Extensive usage of examples to promote reflection on diversity
- Using course literature that delves into diversity issues
- Incorporating visual aids in courses to advance understanding of cultural differences

- Learning about difficulties related to integration of people from different countries and cultures
- Expanding their ways of thinking by interacting with people with different backgrounds
- Cultivating empathy for others and being open to diversity
- Becoming motivated to make change happen and promote the benefits of interculturality

- Being different: a good opportunity to share experiences/compare things/get an understanding about others
- Someone's experiences of living abroad formulate the way of thinking/understanding/behaving to others
- Accepting people with different background as a consequence of living abroad

2nd order themes

Integrating international dimensions in the courses' content * Getting an understanding-Becoming open to other cultures

Deriving benefits from informal interactions with people of diverse backgrounds *Cultivating empathy

Developing intercultural understanding by reflecting upon oneself's experiences

Aggregated dimensions

Building intercultural skills of students
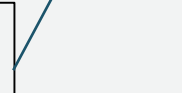
Interculturality as an internationalisation skill

Dissonance between a cognitive understanding of interculturality as a concept, and the opportunity to enact it in a relational and academic context

- Positive responses to cultural and ethnic diversity & to 'meeting' others - But

- Critique of monocultural and ethnocentric approaches in teacher education curricula and settings

- Critique of a systematic 'idealizing of Sweden' in teacher education

- Few 'international dimensions' in courses & not as well integrated

extracts

"this can be really problematic... talking about the Swedish preschool as being very good and all the others as not as good means we are uncritically assessing this from our own cultural position and background and from our own national point of view" (Olga, 3rd year student, ECEC).

"We did have one international lecturer from the US and last semester we had a guest lecturer from Sri-Lanka. And, that was just a two-hour lecture on their educational system. The program itself is very focused on the Swedish school and workplace. As I said, two guest lectures and they have been a bit tacked on, ...the purpose of it has been somewhat unclear although interesting to hear those perspectives. Some of my classmates were like, what are we going to use this for?" (Hanna, 3rd year student in Syv)

The limits of internationalisation at home

There are systematic institutional limitations to incorporating IaH in degree programs.

- Many opportunities for students to participate in international events in two of the largest Swedish universities, but seen as remote;

- Curricula do not allow space for international dimensions other than in superficial ways;

- Both the preschool and the study- and career counselling programs are nationally focused in terms of both regulatory and curricular frameworks (national goals for HE (SFS 1992:1434) and program-specific goals (SFS 1993:100))

The institutional perspective

There is no space and no commitment to internationalisation in the organization and structure of programs – this applies to both universities across the 4 programs

- Internationalisation in teacher education is up to individual tutor initiative

- Postgraduate activities tend to capture all the resources

- Internationalisation activities are compartmentalised rather than mainstreamed

- Difficult to change ways of working within established program teams and contents

extracts, 2

"*We have program committees but they almost never focus on IaH. ... If we want to integrate it more in our programs, perhaps we need a different organisation, and time for the program chairs.... To get all of them to do work on IaH in the same direction, is a lot of work ... the current organisation perhaps is not optimal for that. Also, it is in a separate box. Linus works with it but not the education course leaders.*" (Malin, Teacher Education management)

"*...we have the space to do it, but there isn't strong encouragement or commitment. If I can fund it and organize it, I am free to do it -then everyone is happy. But that is as far as we do.*" (Luis, professor)

"*There is no model or method ...there is no skill on how we should do it in teacher education, what this competence is*" (Annalena, lecturer in ECEC)

The nature of education as a discipline

The perception of the discipline as 'national' is significant in shaping the outlook of students towards international questions and their own future personal and professional mobility

- Students see their courses as very 'national' in focus, orientation, object and regulation

- Lack of international knowledge and highly contextual nature of courses

- Conflating contextual nature of the subject with the transferability of knowledge, skills and competence

- Limited opportunities to read texts in English or use English

- Difficulties identified (by some) students in future communications with parents in schools

- Problems identified by students and academics with lack of engagement with published international research in the field

"I am going to be a teacher one day and I am probably going to have to face parents or kids who don't speak... you have to speak good English and to be able to write in English and have general good English knowledge" (Molly, 3rd year student in ECEC)

"If all students are Swedish, you cannot motivate them to discuss in English... there are big parts of teacher education courses that have to do with [Swedish] language teaching" (Katarina, TE management)

"for the first years of my appointment (in the 2000s) research and going to conferences abroad, was ...not discouraged but seen as irrelevant to teacher education. This is slowly changing" (Ingrid, lecturer).

"Mother tongue is always the first language you can express yourself in and write ... students also take written exams, it's difficult to express yourself in a second language, so this is not for the Swedish students" (Elin, study director)

Concluding points – integrating internationalization in education

- There are high policy ambitions regarding internationalisation in Swedish Universities

- In education programs this policy objective occupies a marginal and often peripheral position

- Few links to international themes and curricula and programs / not well integrated

- However, the students are overwhelmingly positive to further development of their studies to be more explicitly informed by: international examples, comparative perspectives, and a scientific basis that draws from internationally-informed learning environments.

Concluding points – the nature of education as a discipline

The disciplinary context for internationalisation is clearly as important as the university-specific one

Disciplinary 'communities' are necessary drivers for internationalization (DeWit & Leask, 2015)

Core questions in the discipline of education are of a global nature:

➢ What is the nature of education, what are its values and purposes? How can we understand, organise and improve teaching and learning processes? How do we account for the cultural, political, economic and social contexts of such processes?

We can reflect on curricula, learning contexts and teaching-learning practices, even where international interactions are limited

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Thank you for your attention !

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