

International Environments and Practices of Higher Education

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Higher Education Environments, Human Capital Mobility, and a Question of Identity

Dieu Hack-Polay, Andrea Caputo and Deborah Lock

This book discusses various aspects of issues of practice in higher education (HE) environments which are increasingly intertwined due to globalisation and the marketisation of HE. It examines the impact of international mobility not only on the learning process and outcomes for students but also on the academic human capital that crosses borders. As the international borders become more fluid and enable the ease of academic mobility, the result is the development of complexities in practices and the integration of cultural values. However, a significant phenomenon that runs through the chapters is the question of identity as both academics and students navigate different cultural identities irrespective of whether they work or study in their own country or across borders. The experience of multiple cultures through the classroom and educational programmes is facilitated by the diverse backgrounds of academics and national cultures, with a new set of identities emerging (Hack-Polay, Mahmoud, Kordowicz, Madziva, & Kivunja, 2021). Thus, the book examines issues that transcend programme delivery in the classroom, and touches on complex psychological processes that are engendering a new race of learners and academics. The chapters capture a dialogue of cultures whose impact is vehemently felt by both returnee students and academics, as well as the host and home national cultures. An important area of analysis concerns virtual mobility. It is often thought of academic mobility as spatial move, but the book positions it as transcending the physicality. For example, owing to improvements in technologies, educators, and learners can travel and meet via remote learning, thus making HE teaching teams and student cohorts more and more diverse as notions of global citizenship come to the forefront of everyday learning and working lives. The paragraphs below summarize some of these complexities, provide insight into the evolving global HE landscape.

This book discusses the notion of authentic learning, using the experience of students on specialist masters' programmes. This runs through all aspects of such programmes, from design to implementation. It provides evidence that in an

increasingly volatile environment, educators must provide learners with the necessary skills and competencies needed to navigate uncertain possible futures. These futures are navigated not only locally but more and more on the global stage. In Chapter 2, Georgina Els examines the 10 key characteristics of authentic learning and the deployment of practical activities developed in collaboration with international postgraduate students. Through experiential learning, Els argues, students can adapt, build resilience, and take ownership of their own learning journey by flourishing in a multicultural classroom.

Vikki Abusidualghoul (Chapter 3) focuses on the topic of understanding feedback from the diverse student cohorts' perspective and comments on what makes formative and summative feedback effective, and how feedback can be embedded effectively in the virtual learning context, as well as the determinants of active engagement in the feedback process. The examination draws on insights from relevant literature, from learning and teaching activities in Warwick Business School's Distance Learning MBA (DLMBA), and from data relating to a review of DLMBA students' reflections on impactful feedback that they themselves have experienced. The chapter culminates with a set of key findings and recommendations that could be applied to any programme with a view to aiding colleagues and students with their engagement in effective feedback experiences.

The types of employability skills and how to infuse employability skills into education is increasingly clear in theory, but in practice, these are proving difficult for the HE system in developing countries. A key question is why and how can HE system focus on graduate outcomes? It could be argued that the African debilitating unemployment crisis has been mainly because of the low levels of skills and low standard of education. Building on 'Postcolonial Theory' (PT), Chinyere Augusta Nwajiuba, Micheal Olayinka Binuomote, and Paul Agu Igwe's (Chapter 4) chapter focuses on graduate outcomes to examine the current unemployment situation in Africa, causes and solutions to the challenges. By exploring issues related to over-reliance on outdated curriculum, poor teaching pedagogy, low government expenditure on education, and ineffective education policies, they identify ways to improve HE, the benefit of the labour force, and ensure sustainable development (SD).

This book also reflects on the use of self-directed learning (SDL) on remote teamwork within the context of an innovation and entrepreneurship educational programme aimed at developing innovative business ideas. Alessandra Scroccaro and Alessandro Rossi (Chapter 9) critically discuss the effectiveness of SDL practices on supporting remote teamwork and the acquisition of transversal skills for international graduate students. Their analysis presents evidence from two editions of the programme, an in-presence, and a remote edition, organized, respectively, before and during the Covid-19 outbreak. The case study provided shows how SDL practices can moderate the negative effects of remote work by supporting the engagement in the programme and the development of a general disposition towards entrepreneurship measured in terms of self-efficacy, awareness, intent, and envisioned work situation, and discuss how such practices can support learners in developing a stronger entrepreneurial mindset.

One of the key influences of HE human capital mobility is on the excellence in teaching synchronous and hybrid classes. According to Selina Neri (Chapter 7),

this is probably one of the key challenges but also opportunities brought by evolving technologies and the non-residential location of learners. It is undeniable that over the past few years synchronous and hybrid classes have become necessary, more common, and increasingly popular in HE. They have changed the art of the possible and are seen as the new normal. However, despite the opportunities this pedagogical method offers, it also presents several challenges, as academics accustomed to in-person teaching may find it difficult to adapt and thrive in this new environment. Based on a case study of best practices in three triple accredited (Equis-AMBA-AACSB) business schools operating in the USA, Europe, and Asia, this chapter presents a collection of best teaching practices in classes that combine in-person and virtual modes of study, where students participate together in real-time class activities. Gaining insights into the merits and limitations of teaching synchronous and hybrid classes can help academics and schools towards enhancing excellence in the student experience and promote greater collaboration among academics and between faculty and students. This book discusses the meaning and exemplification of excellence, from the perspectives of academics who have successfully adopted this pedagogy to inform course design, the use of technology, student engagement, class delivery, student assessment, and institutional cooperation.

A key perspective taken in the book is that academic mobility does not only impact on students and the learning process, but also it has significant bearing on educators and how they construct and navigate different identities. In some cases, it is realistic to speak of crises of identities, both professional and cultural (Hack-Polay, 2013). This crisis of identity also transcends the individual academic to touch the whole HE systems in some countries, particularly in the developing world. However, these crises ultimately represent cognitive and cultural learning processes which establish the global academic as agent of change and global knowledge transfer (Hack-Polay, 2020). We start by considering the implications of human capital and labour for HE in Africa. This book draws on educational management experiences of the chapter authors to examine the concept of human capital. The attention is directed to the crucial question of cross-border labour mobility that governments have to confront as graduate unemployment grows amidst deepening poverty and other macroeconomic shocks, so as to ensure that the burden of job creation is shared among countries. The coverage here identifies policy inconsistencies and poor policy coordination as among the severe constraints to optimal human capital development and more productive deployment of this vital resource. The impact of these on the HE system of two representative countries was examined against the backdrop of growing calls for greater regional integration on the continent. Concerns remain about possible loss of international competitiveness and imminent reduction in the attractiveness of countries as destinations for study and academic employment. Ajuruchukwu Obi, Taiwo Olufunmilayo Olusa, and Adewuni Stephen Oladapo (Chapter 8) provide some guideposts on how affected countries can tackle the problem and take advantage of the new insights and opportunities created by Covid-19 protocols to plan and implement alternative systems and procedures such as virtual platforms that eliminate the necessity for physical availability.

Switching to the issues of identity navigation, we draw on a personal account of encounter with host culture and its influence on creating ambivalent identities (Hack-Polay et al., 2021). Research on sojourn experiences appears to indicate that temporarily living abroad interrupts and redirects peoples' cultural identity as they negotiate and shift their identities to better fit with the new environment within which they are operating (Dickens, Womack, & Dimes, 2019; Zhang & Xaio, 2021). April Liu, Deborah Lock, and Dieu Hack-Polay (Chapter 6) adopt a biographical reflexivity lens to explore events that were captured from a living abroad life: firstly, as an international student from mainland China attending university in the UK, and secondly as an international academic following a move from being a student to being a full-time member of the teaching staff at the same university. The shifting of a cultural identity to one more reflective of those found in a host country was subtle, and one which the author was not conscious of until challenges by Chinese students provoked reflection about her 'Chineseness' resulting from student expectations of the author's conformity to and understanding of Chinese ways of teaching with its emphasis on rote learning and memorisation (Ai & Wang, 2017; Wang, 2018). At the institutional level, the coverage here considers the cultural and conceptual challenges facing one HE institution as it sought to deliver high quality continuing professional development (CPD) to teachers and senior leaders from several Chinese provinces (David Littlefair, Joanne Clifford Swan, and Karen Hudson – Chapter 5). Divergent thinking around pedagogy, as well as differing national and provincial educational structures often make the attainment of meaningful change difficult, particularly through small-scale projects. Nevertheless, it poses pertinent questions about the current landscapes within HE. As new transnational partnerships are sought and developed by many universities worldwide, it is incumbent upon them to more fully understand the contexts within which they are working and ensure more meaningful dialogue between partners.

Finally, an important of HE environments discussed in the book is how mobility represents a significant learning journey for the academic, not just the students. So, through the interaction with diverse education systems, client groups and cultures, the academic develops a new mindset and skills. We return to the already discussed scaffolding curriculum strategies and cultural intelligence but this time we apply this to teachers' own learning. As universities operate in a global environment, internationalisation is inevitable for HE, as it is driven externally by political, economic, and sociocultural globalisation forces. Through decoding and deconstructing the English language proficiency of international students and the international student experience at universities in the UK, Cheryl Yu and Heather McClean (Chapter 10) investigates how university academics should consider employing both scaffolding strategies and cultural intelligence in their teaching and learning to enhance the international student experience and bridge the gap in educational attainment between home and international students. This calls for academics to re-assess and reconceptualise what teaching, and learning means in a culturally and linguistically diverse context (Mahan, 2022; van de Pol, Volman, Oort, & Beishuizen, 2015). It also aims to encourage further research

around the convergence of English language and the disciplines, as well as the internationalisation and equality, diversity, and inclusivity of higher education policies and strategies.

Providing practical tools for improving both students' learning experiences and academics' agile classroom practices this book will appeal to researchers, students, and practitioners from the social sciences (specially business, management, and education) as well as foreign language tutors and teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) practitioners. Human resource professionals, recruiters, and trainers responsible for recruiting, training, and developing international HE staff will also find this book to be of interest.

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Chapter 2

Authentic Learning – Insights from a Tourism Postgraduate Programme

Georgiana Els

Abstract

Authentic learning or learning by doing involves real-world problems and their solutions using role-play, problem-based actions, case studies, and engagement with communities of practice in a multicultural environment by its very nature (Lombardi, 2007). Authentic learning will be explored through the lenses of an international postgraduate programme in International Tourism Management and mainly through a module that is team coached and underpins the degree. The reflective chapter examines two journeys: (i) master students who take ownership of their learning in a team setting environment; and (ii) tutor/s who take the role of team coach and facilitate student's abilities to self-manage and take responsibility of their own learning and development. The journey is discussed from the perspective and characteristics of authentic learning activities employed in the design, implementation, and assessment of the module and, overall, the postgraduate programme. Drawing on the experiences of authentic activities presented, learnings can be applied to various modules and degrees given the broad context of tourism in a global context.

Keywords: authentic learning; team learning; communities of practice; multicultural environment; postgraduate; tourism

1. Introduction

An old proverb says, *Giving a man a fish, you will feed him for a day, teaching a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.* In a society that expects students to be prepared for an increasingly unknown future, education has the obligation to equip learners with the tools and ability to navigate the unknown waters of the

future (Hardie, Highfield, & Lee, 2020). Thus, it is not unexpected that learning how to learn has been outlined as the key skill of our times (Lucas, 2005). Across the world, educational settings are implementing authentic learning practices where the focus is set on the learners and their ability to learn and improve the way students receive, retain, and transfer knowledge (Lombardi, 2007). According to Yeoman (2012) authentic learning can be defined from both a student and a teacher/facilitator perspective – from a student view, it is a learning process in which knowledge is created and negotiated, while, from a facilitator perspective, learning by doing is important as it is eased through an action learning process of real and complex issues and questions.

This chapter describes how the author created an authentic learning environment for a postgraduate degree in International Tourism Management and mainly achieved through a team coached module – TOU9166M Personal Professional Development (PPD) which underpins the programme.

2. Authentic Learning/Learning by Doing

In a teaching and learning context, the term ‘authentic’ indicates the aspect of being real, having a connection with a ‘real’ situation, context, or environment (Albrecht, 2012). Paddison and Walmsley (2021) refer to the gap between business practice and tourism education which resulted in a push towards establishing a community of practice focused on collaboration and authentic learning activities. Learning by doing or authentic learning focuses on real-world problems and their solutions by focusing problem-based activities and engagement with communities of practice (Lombardi, 2007). As described by Albrecht (2012), communities of practice are groups of learners who share a passion for a subject, and they interact on a regular basis to improve their learning abilities and knowledge.

Students engaged in authentic learning experiences develop transferable skills that are best acquired by practicing within a team setting. Within a self-determined/heutagogical environment (Hase & Kenyon, 2001), students take ownership of their learning and career progression by becoming:

- Independent problem finders.
- Creating individual journeys with the thought that there is always more to learn and relearn.
- Resilient learners thriving in complexity and uncertainty.
- Flexible and able to work across disciplinary and cultural boundaries to generate innovative solutions (Lombardi, 2007, p. 3).

In team coaching sessions, students are engaged in learning by doing activities which enables them to acquire and practice the skills of active listening, questioning, dialogue, building on arguments, challenging, providing opportunities for chaos and disorder, being comfortable with silence and not knowing. The learning from the coaching sessions is further enhanced through various activities where students are producing new ideas and thoughts that will further be generated into final outcomes used by real businesses or within their own companies.