Rethinking pedagogy in the context of the English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum: towards 'transformative internationalisation'

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Introduction

- What does transformative internationalisation mean:
  a) For teachers and learners
  b) For departments
  c) Institutions
  d) Wider society?

- Action research project with Newcastle and Northumberland universities and with the International Institute for Critical Pedagogy and Transformative Leadership

- Partially funded by HEA.
‘Symbolic’ v. ‘transformative’ internationalisation:

- Frequently symbolic e.g. ‘ticky boxes’
- ‘Doing without thinking’
- Physical presence in classrooms does not equal cultural interchange
- ‘There may be a semblance of change but not really’.

- Transformative is two-way: actors AND institutions are transformed.
Dilemmas for practitioner researchers engaged with international courses and/or institutional internationalisation:

- Compliance around economic incentives; neo-liberal imperative
- ‘Survival of the fittest’
- Uneven awareness across institution
- One-year MA programmes ‘ghettoised’ within university culture.
- Communitarian around critical pedagogy
- Opportunity to develop constructions of knowledge that are ‘generative, critical and dialogic’
- Fitness for purpose.
Freirian principles and social constructivist methodology:

- Problem posing pedagogy
- Knowledge-generating curriculum
- Self-examining institution
- Questioning organisation

- Holistic interpretations of learning/teaching/research/theory; but also participation (activism)/governance; i.e. not separate spheres.
Collaborative action research methodology:

- A frame and structure: for supporting the articulation of ontological and epistemological beliefs
- A lens: a process through which different ideas and understandings about practice and enquiry can be shared
- A scaffold: a way of capturing change that has occurred
- A catalytic tool: for professional learning.

(Robson et al)
Experience and inspiration: drawn from three intercultural research projects at KU...

- McNerney, K.: *Lessons from the field: What can we learn from the early childhood education practices of Wales and New Zealand?*
- Struthers, D.: *Towards pedagogical partnership with teachers; Professional Learning Schools and the challenges for a Schools Partnership*
…and ELT programme data:

- 5 years, 65 students, 24 nationalities, of which
  
  EU (non-UK) = 29
  UK = 11
  International = 25

- Male = 9, Female = 56

*MA Education (English Language Teaching)*. Joint project, School of Education and School of Humanities
ELT 07-11 by Region and Gender

- UK: Male 3, Female 10
- EU (non-UK): Male 25, Female 22
- International: Male 25, Female 22

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Known destinations:

- ELT Teacher, College of Business Administration
- Marketing Manager, International Office, Further Education College
- Graduate Student, MBA in Business Studies
- Graduate Student, Graduate Diploma in Law
- English Teacher and Tutor of Infant Education
- English Teacher, Girls' School, 3rd & 4th Grades
- Part-time Higher Education Lecturer and PhD Student
- English Teacher, Primary, Secondary and High School
- Lecturer in English and Head of English and Communication dept. Polytechnic Institute
- Teacher: General and Business English
- PhD Student, ELT
- PhD Student, School of Education, Kingston
- Teacher, English for International Students, Further Education College
- Administration, publishing company.
- PhD applicant, ELT.
Recognised need to beware false dichotomies e.g. ‘home’/ international students.

- What is meant by ‘home’ students?
- Issues of sexism: ‘the elephant in the room’
- Power dynamics – ‘rigid views’
- Confucianism v. critical thinking?
- Important to resist reductive thinking and definitions e.g. difficulties not (merely) attributed to language and culture
- An intercultural learning model, not a deficit model.
Foci of the Action Research:

- Problematise context of ‘home’ students on ‘international’ courses

- Problematise wider university as ‘third space’ (Whitchurch, 2012) where professionals work across administrative and teaching boundaries

- Develop concepts, tools and methods for transformative internationalisation.
A theoretical and empirical basis for curriculum development (e.g. move from 15 to 30 credit modules)

- That recognises the complexity of the issues
- That considers educative value of postgrad. qualification in and beyond its immediate content/subject matter
- That prioritises the intercultural learning opportunities that internationalised courses (should) provide
- ‘Third space’ opportunities within wider university?
Ongoing, shared dialogic themes:

- Difference / Dissonance
- Policy / Politics
- Organisation/ Institution
- ‘A home for research and writing’
- ‘Systematic enquiry made public’ (Stenhouse 1981)
- Academic curriculum embedded in and created through its socio-cultural context
- Change agents in curriculum development/changed actors in the field?