Developing Globally-Competent University Teachers

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SUMMARY

What is global competence in university teaching? And, assuming we can provide some sort of reasonable answer to that first question, how might it be developed? What is argued within this paper is that the traditional university assumption that subject experts (with no – or scarcely any – pedagogic training) make fit teachers is even less justifiable when these teachers travel abroad to teach overseas students than when they operate in their home university with students who, for the most part, share many of their own socio-cultural values and beliefs. Given that higher education teachers in the UK will soon be expected (though not required) to seek membership of the Institute of Learning and Teaching (ILT) based either on their completion of an accredited training programme or on their submission of a portfolio evidencing their practical competence in teaching there is therefore a national, systemic, move towards pedagogic training. However it is argued further that, though necessary and desirable for all university teachers wherever they are teaching, academic subject knowledge and accredited pedagogic skills are still insufficient for those wishing to be regarded internationally as globally competent teachers. Two further requirements are both necessary and desirable for global competence in teaching: the adoption of a transformative and democratic approach to education and the development of what may be termed an ethnographic stance to teaching abroad.

INTRODUCTION

Before considering the notion of global competence in university teaching I would like to say a little about the two terms ‘global’ and ‘international’. Often I use them to mean much the same thing, as virtual synonyms for ‘world-wide’. However the term ‘globalization’ is itself a highly-contested concept and is used either pejoratively to indicate the crushing or demeaning of the local or the indigenous by, for example, multinational corporations or, in a more laudatory sense, to support a view of greater social, economic and cultural freedom through the exchange of goods and ideas in the global market-place. I try not to use ‘global’ in either of these pejorative or laudatory ways although I show in this paper that I am aware of some of the dangers of socio-cultural imperialism or colonialization which are seen by some critics as examples of globalization. I am also inclined to use ‘international’ in a somewhat positive ideological sense to support or advocate the development of a community of interest and cooperation between nations. In this sense I am writing more as an internationalist than as a globalist and I could, perhaps more appropriately, have entitled this paper ‘Developing internationally-competent university teachers’.

GLOBAL COMPETENCE IN UNIVERSITY TEACHING

Anyone at all acquainted with higher education (certainly in the UK) will be aware that the notion of competence is also itself highly contested. Indeed Barnett (1984) examined both operational and academic competence and judged that ‘both are limiting ideologies, and contain impoverished views as to what it might be to develop interactive minds engaging with the world and searching collaboratively for wisdom’ (Barnett, 1994, p 186).

Nevertheless, even for Barnett, ‘competence is not to
be derided’ (p 187) so that we need initially to bear in mind that, whatever else may be desirable for university teachers, both academic and operational competence are a sine qua non of their professional lives, including those times when they may be functioning abroad.

**ACADEMIC COMPETENCE**

What then would be expected of academically competent university teachers operating abroad? At the very least they would be expected to have a clear general understanding of their field together with a deeper knowledge of some particular specialized aspect of it. Knowledge here would include skills in the major research and scholarly methodologies used in their discipline. In other words it is likely, in a global context at least, that university teachers would be expected to be both generalists and specialists at one and the same time in order to meet the wide range of expectations of overseas students and staff. Their overseas students and academic colleagues would also, undoubtedly, expect that university teachers travelling abroad would have diligently attended to their own continuing professional development so that what they carry with them is up-to-date and not obsolete (see Knight, 1998, p 248), where professional obsolescence in higher education is defined as ‘the way that changes in the work environment (for example, the need for new knowledge, changed expectations, new working roles) mean that existing competence is no longer sufficient for effective performance. That competence has not deteriorated; demands have moved ahead of it’.

All this is, of course, fairly obvious. However the main danger is that university teachers (and not just in the context of teaching abroad) may feel that attending to the disciplinary or cognitive or content aspects of their teaching – their academic competence – is the be-all and end-all of their responsibilities. After all university teaching is university teaching wherever it is located and as long as the material is reasonably up-to-date (and not totally obsolete) and the ground is more or less covered then there won’t be too many complaints.

**OPERATIONAL COMPETENCE**

Such a view fails to take into account the need also for operational competence in university teaching. In addition to ‘knowing that’ (their subject expertise) university teachers also need to ‘know how’ (their pedagogical approach) and, in the global context, they need the additional operational competence of how to function in different socio-cultural conditions.

Unfortunately a large number of university teachers, although confident in their academic competence, are somewhat under prepared for the actual process of teaching itself whether in a domestic or an overseas context. Indeed it is often the case that university teachers are notoriously unreflective about their own approaches to teaching and adopt strategies which derive almost entirely from how they themselves were taught as undergraduates – with understandably mixed results.

Part of the trouble here is that many university teachers inherit what may be termed a functionalist model of education, a model whose dominant epistemology emphasises the expert transmission of a non-negotiable curriculum of concepts and facts to relatively-passive students via highly-didactic pedagogic strategies. Ramsden (1992) characterizes this theory of teaching as the telling or transmission of unproblematic knowledge: teachers are regarded (even on occasions revered) as the authoritative source of undistorted information about the world and there is also a ‘belief that the fundamental problems of university instruction inhere in the amount of information to be transmitted, and that these problems can be solved by technical fixes designed to transmit more of it faster’ (pp 111–2). In other words there is a tendency to offer technological solutions to pedagogical problems on the assumption that it is better or more effective transmission of knowledge (or, more accurately, information) which is the key issue in university teaching.

Askew and Carnell (1998) also attack this functionalist model of education because it is mechanistic and because it fails to take a holistic approach to the educational needs of students including, in a rapidly-changing technological and global age, their needs for learning how to learn and for keeping up-to-date. This form of operational competence is so concerned with what teachers transmit that it neglects almost entirely the learning strategies students might adopt to further their own understanding. Consequently and inevitably functionalism and operationalism seem to encourage a surface approach to learning rather than a deep approach (Askew and Carnell, 1998, p 87; Ramsden, 1992, p 81).
AN EXPANDED OPERATIONAL COMPETENCE

Both Ramsden and Askew and Carnell offer alternative views of what we may take to be an expanded operational competence in university teaching. In Ramsden’s case he espouses a ‘theory of teaching as making learning possible’ (pp 114–16) which moves teaching beyond the transmission of academic content towards a co-operative process which encourages students to engage actively with the subject matter. Here teaching is not so much authoritative telling as speculative questioning and inquiry with teachers becoming reflective practitioners who listen to their students (and to other teachers) about puzzling events that require reconceptualization. Teaching thus has to be seen as context-related, uncertain and continuously improvable with a central function of recognizing different ways of encouraging different students to learn using different sequences of material and learning tasks. This suggests that successful approaches to teaching students in, say, a UK context may not necessarily be satisfactorily exported overseas where both the students taught and the educational context are different.

A TRANSFORMATORY AND DEMOCRATIC APPROACH

Askew and Carnell (1998) argue for a much more radical view of education as a process of transformation (presumably beyond both operational and academic competence). They criticize what they identify as the dominant model of education (‘individualistic, authoritarian, hierarchical, competitive and focused on what is learned’) and offer instead an approach which is ‘collaborative, non-hierarchical, and which focuses on the learning experiences and processes in the social context’ (p 167). They maintain that this transformatory approach ‘sees everyone as proactive learners who can use intellectual and emotional skills to initiate, negotiate, evaluate their experiences and bring about actions for change.’ (p 167).

Askew and Carnell also emphasize the need for a democratic approach which empowers teachers to contribute to a vision of individual and global change based on co-operation, power-sharing, justice and learning’ (p 167). Indeed ‘the increasing democratization of political systems’ (see Sadlak, 1998, p 100) is identified by UNESCO as one of the major forces likely to be shaping the society of the 21st century and as such must necessarily have its impact on university teachers operating in a global context. In a sense they will be expected to espouse democratic values in their own teaching and adopt more democratic teaching and assessment strategies. And as Palous (1995, p 177) has argued:

Universities and institutions of higher education, in general, have their own significant role in a global coexistence, and this is their responsibility for introducing their graduates to the movement of self-transcendence described: this means that they must lead them to openness.

By ‘openness’, which I take to be an especially democratic and transforming feature, Palous means ‘academic disputation and learning’ so that university teachers should not only pass on knowledge and skills (at home and abroad) but also be ‘open in their field of inquiry, problematics and controversy’ (p 177).

In effect globally competent university teachers not only have to see themselves as academically and pedagogically competent but also to take on the role of democratic global citizens with all of the risks, rights and duties entailed. One particular danger for the global teacher is ‘cultural homogenization which destroys local cultures’ (Urry, 1998, p 13). Global rights, which one might expect teachers to want for both themselves and their (overseas) students, could include:

- access to the Internet and other electronic media;
- the ability to migrate from one society to another, to stay and to return;
- the ability to carry one’s culture and its central icons with one and to encounter on arrival a hybrid culture containing some elements of one’s culture.

And global duties might include:

- demonstrating a stance of cosmopolitan openness towards other environments and cultures;
- engaging in appropriate forms of behaviour with regard to other cultures, environments and politics which are consistent with notions of sustainability;
- responding to images, icons, narratives and so on, which address people as citizens of the globe rather than as purely citizens of a nation, ethnic group, gender, class or generation;
- seeking to convince others that they should also seek to act on behalf of the globe as a whole and not of particular bounded territories.

This transformatory and democratic approach to education fits in very clearly with Knowles’ andragogical
model of learning with its emphasis on the increasingly-self-directed learner, the development of a warm, relaxed, trusting, informal, collaborative climate or context for learning, the diagnosis of learning needs and designing of learning plans by mutual assessment and negotiation, the use of inquiry projects, independent study and experiential techniques as major learning activities and evaluation by learner-collected evidence validated by peers, facilitators and experts (Knowles, 1995, pp 89–90). Indeed Knowles argues that an essential part of creating an atmosphere conducive to learning is the creation of culture of openness and authenticity, both of which are also vital to a transformatory and democratic approach to education (p 7):

When people feel free to say what they really think and feel, they are more willing to examine new ideas and risk new behaviours than when they feel defensive. If teachers or trainers demonstrate openness and authenticity in their own behaviour, this will be a model that learners will want to adopt.

THE DANGERS OF ‘INTELLECTUAL IMPERIALISM’

I would also suggest that an approach to teaching abroad which goes beyond mere academic competence and which espouses a transformatory view of education needs to take into account the assumption that different cultures have different views about the purposes of higher education. In many countries such purposes may include the creation or preservation of a national culture or the production of skilled manpower and the promotion of national economic development which may, consequently, limit the achievement of the various aims typically urged upon us as university teachers in the UK by, for example, the recent Dearing Report (Dearing, 1997, 5.39):

- a commitment to the pursuit of truth;
- a responsibility to share knowledge;
- freedom of thought and expression;
- analysing evidence rigorously and using reasoned argument to reach a conclusion;
- a willingness to listen to alternative views and judge them on their merits;
- taking account of how one’s own arguments will be perceived by others;
- a commitment to consider the ethical implications of different findings and practises.

We need to be aware, therefore, that educational values such as these (which are relatively non-contentious in a Western European or North American context) may well clash with those espoused by staff and students abroad and may produce, if we export them as our taken-for-granted assumptions about higher education, a certain degree of ‘ambivalence, frustration and disjunction’ (George, 1995, p 14). Indeed we need to be especially sensitive to the great danger of ‘intellectual imperialism’ where we boldly export our academic products, avowed principles and operational processes, irrespective of their western origins, to students abroad carrying with us ‘an undercurrent of the cult of the individual, personal empowerment and certification, and competitive striving’ since these ‘minor educational sub-texts may grow to catastrophic proportions in exotic environments’ (Johnston, 1999).

GLOBAL TEACHING WITHOUT DOMINATION

This raises another vital question (at home and abroad): how can we educate without dominating? Perhaps a working answer to this question is that provided by Seller (1997) when she suggested that all educators (whether at home or abroad?) would agree that they were aiming at ‘enabling students to scrutinize their world and their response to it, to place themselves in relationship to their culture, so that they can act responsibly, both for themselves and their society’. Otherwise, if we fail to adopt this student-enabling approach to education, we may well personify, in our role as teachers abroad, a privileging of the viewpoint of the middle-class white European (usually) male whilst ‘rendering all other perspectives, experiences, voices – in brief people – simply as other’ (see Seller, 1997, p. 89). (Actually Seller was mainly writing about the way that women’s views are subject to domination by men but I am using what she has said to serve as a summary of the dangers we create if we simply export our home-based assumptions abroad – we turn our foreign students into not quite our own kind of person but into alien others.)

Perhaps what we need is a succinct model of good university teaching, a model which powerfully conveys the main requirements for good teaching virtually anywhere and which includes a built-in sense of respect for diversity and otherness. What follows is a suggestion which owes much to research in the USA which has attempted to convey the broad range of teaching in that country’s diversified system of higher education, which contains over 3,600 institutions and which attempts to cope with a huge diversity of student groups from the remedial (and the multi-ethnic) to the post-
It is a model (based on Wingspread, 1993) which explicitly:

- values teaching and learning as more concerned with inquiry into knowledge rather than transmission of knowledge;
- encourages student-teacher contact;
- promotes co-operation among students;
- fosters an active and deep approach to learning;
- requires prompt feedback to students;
- provides prime time on main learning tasks;
- generates high expectations and individual responsibility; and
- respects diversity.

It is the requirement that we must respect diversity in our teaching which takes on an especially crucial significance when we are abroad since there we have to become even more sensitive not only to our own, but also to our students’, inevitable otherness. The European Commission has recently endorsed not only the ‘active pedagogies’ which feature in this emerging global model but also a specific advance known as ‘border pedagogy’ which is defined as ‘a strategy for learning about the cultural Other, by looking critically at how images, representations and texts are constructed, and at their hidden messages. This approach facilitates learning how to identify one’s own “borders”, those of others, and the borders of the external social world. Learning to appreciate differences as a positive opportunity must become one of the key competencies for Europeans’ (EC, 1997, p 19) and, indeed, for anyone else who is at all concerned to become a globally competent teacher.

TAKING AN ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH

Indeed we seem unlikely to become globally competent teachers unless we adopt an ethnographic or intercultural approach to our own learning about others: ‘The skills involved here [and more especially there] are analogous to research skills, in particular those practised in modern ethnography or as developed through intercultural education. Most simply, these skills involve making the familiar strange and the strange familiar: being able to switch between standpoints and identify positions, and between empathy and critical distance... The idea of “border pedagogy” is one significant attempt to catch what is meant by education for empowerment. Crossing borders (one’s own, those of others, internal vs. external borders) is a core skill for European citizens’ (EC, 1997, pp 59–60) and, I would again add, for any university teacher, whether from Africa, the Americas, Australasia or Europe, who intends to become competent in the use of ‘genuinely intercultural teaching strategies’ abroad.

What I am suggesting therefore is that global competence in university teaching has to take on a deliberately ethnographic turn if it is to be more than merely academically or operationally effective. What I think this means is that university staff, when they travel abroad for (short or long) periods of teaching, need to see themselves not just as academic or even as andragogic experts (though both are necessary and desirable) but also as being (as far as is practicable):

- concerned with sharing the lives and culture of those who are being taught;
- interested in the everyday life of the overseas institution and its environment;
- focused on discovering how students and teachers abroad see and understand the world;
- aware that what they themselves see abroad is a construction made out of their own experience and that their own conceptual tools are neither objectively neutral nor passive – they cannot represent the reality of abroad, instead they construct their own version of abroad.

In effect an ethnographic approach to becoming globally competent teachers requires us to be cautious about offering a privileged view of the world based on an academic expertise which may appear to reject or deny other perspectives. Instead an ethnographic approach would encourage students abroad to examine their own views of the world and to set them alongside and in comparison with those new perspectives brought by visiting teachers. The central point of learning, anywhere, is that which enables students (and us) ‘to see something in the world in a different way’ (Bowden and Marton, 1998, p 7). And as such:

Learning from other people means that we become aware of their ways of seeing things, regardless of whether or not we are convinced by, or appropriate, their ways of seeing. We can talk about a collective consciousness, an awareness of others’ ways of seeing things, as linking individual consciousnesses to each other. From this point of view it is highly relevant for students to learn from each other, as it is for teachers to learn from other teachers. We become aware of our own way of seeing something as a way of seeing only through the contrast with other ways of seeing the same thing.

(Bowden and Marton, 1998, pp 14–15)

As Bowden and Marton emphasize, this view of learning, which I suggest should also characterize the
approach of globally competent teachers, requires ‘a profound respect for other people’s views, and in fact a profound respect for other people’.

Perhaps, however, there is still a danger here of my supporting, even propounding, views of learning and of globally competent teaching which are themselves based on typically Western European perspectives and which may well be regarded as alien elsewhere in the world. How can this dilemma be resolved? Perhaps the way forward here is that indicated by Bowden and Marton when they suggest that having a profound respect for other people’s views of the world demands of us a tolerance which implies that scholarship (including – to use Ernest Boyer’s term – the scholarship of teaching) cannot exist without the realization that, though we think we are right in what we teach, we may actually be wrong (p 15).

Perhaps too the justification for urging an ethnographic approach to global teaching is that, as the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1998, p 143) suggests in terms of ethnography itself:

The risks are worth running because running them leads to a thoroughgoing revision of our understanding of what it is to open (a bit) the consciousness of one group of people to (something of ) the life-form of another, and in that way to (something of) their own.

Furthermore, just as ethnography itself ‘will involve enabling conversation across societal lines’ so taking an ethnographic approach to teaching will also (p 147):

enlarge the possibility of intelligible discourse between people quite different from one another in interest, outlook, wealth, and power, and yet contained in a world where, tumbled as they are into endless connection, it is increasingly difficult to get out of each other’s way.

Overall it is suggested that the achievement of global competence in teaching requires at least four major features or characteristics:

- recognized academic competence (which is up-to-date and not obsolete);
- operational (pedagogical/andragogical) competence as a teacher of adults;
- a transformatory and democratic approach to education; and
- an ethnographic approach to people and cultures.

**DEVELOPING GLOBALLY-COMPETENT UNIVERSITY TEACHERS**

Assuming that this tentative analysis of global competence in university teaching has some merit how might an institution go about helping its staff develop in the directions indicated?

*Academic competence* is usually (and non-problematically?) evidenced in our institutions on the basis of qualifications held (the PhD is already the norm for university teachers in the USA and is rapidly becoming so in the UK and other western universities) together with current research output (now monitored regularly through the Higher Education Funding Council’s Research Assessment Exercise in the UK) and subject-updating through staff development activities such as subject-centred conferences and seminars.

*Operational (pedagogical/andragogical) competence* is at long last being addressed at the systemic level in the UK following the Dearing Report and its recommendation that the HE system establish an Institute of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILT). However pressure is now on universities and colleges to provide their teachers with either appropriate (and ILT-accredited) training programmes (such as the PGCE and MA programmes which have been created in many universities over the past five to ten years in order to provide mainly new teachers with an effective induction into teaching in higher education) or with opportunities for portfolio-building in order to evidence their potential suitability for full membership of the ILT. Indeed it is also likely that candidates for membership of the ILT will be expected to demonstrate that they know and understand

- the subject material which they will teach;
- how their subject is learned and taught;
- how students learn, both generically and in their subject;
- teaching approaches;
- the use of learning technologies;
- techniques for monitoring and evaluating their own teaching;
- their institution’s mission and how it affects teaching and learning strategies;
- implications of quality assurance for practise; and
- regulations, policies and practices affecting their own work (see CVCP, 1998, para. 2.6).

Such a list of requirements goes beyond the usual notion of academic competence expected in a university teacher and makes explicit, more or less for the
first time at a systemic level, a basic model of operational competence.

Unfortunately however, despite an ever-increasing espousal of active pedagogies, many university teachers (and not just in the UK) still regard the lecture as their most effective teaching strategy. And of course it can be an effective method when the content material is new or complicated and when the skilful teacher can provide a useful overview or model to help the students out or even to motivate them through well-chosen examples, illustrations and stories. Unfortunately, however, most of us don’t know when to stop: ‘The professor talks until even the monkey goes to sleep’ (quoted in George, 1995, p 69).

Also as, for the most part, most of those teaching abroad will be working with groups of students whose first language is not English, they shall be better understood and their students will be more attentive if they provide simple outlines, summaries, definitions of key terms, concept maps and other such aids to comprehension.

Teachers abroad could also select from a number of strategies to check out whether their students actually learn anything from their sessions:

- review student note-books for understanding of ideas;
- give mini-quizzes for self-assessment especially at the end of a session;
- check out by asking ‘do you understand?’ and ‘do I make sense?’;
- ask clear, brief questions;
- distribute questions around the class (have each student’s name on a card); and
- use the one-minute paper idea (students are given one minute to summarize an idea or frame a response to a question).

Teachers abroad also need to find out what kinds of feedback their particular students prefer and they probably need to experiment with how they may most effectively provide it (in public or private, providing clear written feedback notes, encouraging students by consistently giving them high marks, giving exemption from assignments or tests, offering extra credit, providing opportunities to work collaboratively or whatever).

However the general rules for giving feedback over here still apply over there (Gibbs et al., 1988, p 104):

- invite the recipient to speak first (to foster skills of self-criticism and protect self-respect)
- be specific rather than general;
- balance positive with corrective feedback;
- direct feedback to behaviour that students can actually change;
- ask for confirmation from others (where appropriate).

Teachers abroad might also have to train overseas students in how to receive feedback (p 104):

- listen to the feedback without comment (without explaining);
- ask for clarification at the end;
- devise action plans for improvement or to try out new ideas;
- keep a written record for later reflection and planning.

All of this is important for teachers wishing to develop and implement their practical or operational competence when they are functioning abroad. However, they will also be expected to develop an explicit code of professional ethics and values which, if adopted and implemented by all university teachers (including those operating abroad), will go some way towards the kind of transformatory and democratic approach to education I have already outlined. It is likely that, for example, the Institute of Learning and Teaching code for UK teachers will probably include:

- a commitment to scholarship in teaching;
- a respect for individual learners and their development;
- a commitment to collegiality;
- a commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity; and
- a commitment to continued reflection and consequential improvements to practise (see CVCP, 1998, para. A.3.1).

The ‘commitment to scholarship in teaching’ should ensure that teachers not only keep their academic knowledge and skills up-to-date but also attend to their own pedagogical or andragogical development.

However, it is the issues of ‘respect for individual learners and their development’, the ‘commitment to collegiality’ and the ‘commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity’ which are most clearly connected to notions of transformation and democracy. Interestingly enough Dearing (1997, para. 23) also stressed that one of the main purposes of higher education should be ‘to
play a major role in shaping a democratic, civilised, inclusive society’ so that the notion of UK teachers travelling abroad and personifying in their teaching a democratic approach to education would seem to have at least a national justification just as UNESCO’s promotion of political democratization also provides some sort of international or global rationale. Also Dearing’s claim that ‘our vision puts students at the centre of the process of learning and teaching’ (Dearing, 1997, para. 35) could be regarded as appropriate to the transformatory and democratic approach to education for the globally competent teacher. It is likely, however, given the growth of managerialism in our universities over the past twenty years or so that the principles and practices of collegiality and democracy have been somewhat diminished and that university teachers will have to be encouraged and helped to re-discover their democratic credentials. This could best be done through the adoption of more democratic and collegial practices in their own institutions so that they could more sensibly and authoritatively become transformatory and democratic educators abroad. Perhaps, in order to help with the necessary debate, university staff development units could run a series of workshops or seminars under the heading ‘What does it mean to be a transformatory and democratic educator at home and abroad?’.

Apart from their academic and operational competence and their transformatory and democratic approach to education I have also argued that globally competent teachers adopt an ethnographic stance towards their teaching abroad. How might colleges and universities encourage and help their staff to develop such a stance without turning them completely into social anthropologists?

Certainly those about to teach abroad (and not just for the first time) could be invited to a seminar or workshop which introduced them to some of the principles and procedures which characterize ethnography with its strong emphasis on exploring the natural setting (including that of the overseas college or university itself) and its concern to collect data from the main participants in that setting (including overseas students and teachers). Typically an ethnographic approach to teaching abroad would entail teachers becoming skilled participant-observers of the new natural setting into which they have been relocated. Perhaps good practice in encouraging teachers to develop an ethnographic approach to teaching abroad would be to expect of them a report of their experience abroad, a report in which they would be expected to convince us not only that they have ‘been there’ but also had we been there we should have seen what they saw, felt what they felt, concluded what they concluded (Geertz, 1988, p 16).

Obviously teachers perceiving and reflecting upon and then reporting their experience of teaching abroad will adopt appropriate modes or strategies probably derived from their own academic backgrounds. They will see and report the new worlds they inhabited (if only briefly) as scientists, as historians, as sociologists, as linguists, as artists, for as such they have already developed powerful ways of seeing and knowing. However I would like to suggest that teachers abroad are not just scientists or artists or historians. I think they should also regard themselves as ethnographers who may choose from another interesting set of ways of perceiving and reporting what they have seen and experienced. These ways range from the comparatively simple ‘teacher as tourist’ to the undoubtedly complex ‘teacher as social critic’. Indeed Geertz mentions each of the following as possible stances for the ethnographer since they represent different ways of gaining a view and collecting data for evaluating the experience:

- tourist;
- traveller;
- pilgrim;
- missionary;
- cartographer;
- participant-observer;
- field-worker;
- commentator; and
- social critic.

Whilst it is most likely that the teacher abroad will, as I have already suggested, adopt the obvious role of participant-observer, part of the challenge, for the teacher as much as the ethnographer, is ‘how to sound like a pilgrim and a cartographer at the same time’ (Geertz, 1988, p 10).

Teachers’ adoption of an ethnographic stance would also be helped and encouraged if they were offered an effective model for initial inquiry during their time abroad. (Of course mounting such an inquiry would only be realistic if teachers were actually functioning overseas for a substantial period such as a semester or a year). One effective model is that offered by Carspecken (1996) who suggests a five stage approach designed to help study ‘social action taking place in one or more social sites and to explain this action through examining locales and social systems intertwined with the site of interest’ (p 40). This approach is most concerned ‘to assess the subjective experiences common to actors on the site and to determine the
significance of the activities discovered with respect to the social system at large’ (p 40).

Preliminary steps in the approach require the teacher-researcher to brainstorm a list of broad questions about the social site itself (such as the classroom and/or the institution in which it is located), the student and/or teacher groups concerned, and/or a particular social or educational problem (e.g. whether the teaching and learning strategies used in the overseas classroom are really appropriate for these particular students) to be examined. The teacher-researcher should also list specific items for examination such as the routines of the student group, main documents to be read, and which actors (students, teachers, administrators, other stakeholders) should be interviewed or questioned.

Carspecken also suggests that teacher-researchers should explore their own value orientations to discover their own biases by, for example, keeping a journal during this field work (see p 41). The first main stage of Carspecken’s model is described as: ‘Compiling the primary record through the collection of monological data’ and requires the teacher-researcher to build up a set of notes about the social site (e.g. the classroom) and the interactions of the site’s actors (students/teachers and others) through observations and conversations (see pp.41–2). Three of the other four stages in Carspecken’s model (‘preliminary reconstructive analysis’, ‘discovering system relations’ and ‘using system relations to explain findings’) are, perhaps, less appropriate for a small-scale action research project conducted by an observer whose main role is teaching. However, his stage three – ‘dialogical data collection’ – would be most useful in this instance since it entails conversing intensively with the subjects under investigation through interviews and discussion groups and ‘generates data with people rather than records information about them’ and as such ‘democratizes the research process’ (p 42). Carspecken actually recommends that portions of his five-stage scheme may be used separately if, for example, one wished to conduct an interview-only study so this is a very flexible model which could be readily adapted for use by teachers wishing to examine and reflect upon their experience of teaching.

CONCLUSION

What is suggested in this paper is that for those teachers who wish to operate effectively abroad both academic competence and operational (especially andragogic) competence are certainly necessary and highly desirable but are insufficient in themselves. It has been argued that teachers need to be encouraged to go beyond competence by adopting not only a transformatory and democratic approach to education but also what I have termed an ethnographic stance. I believe that by going beyond competence in these two ways the dangers of cultural and academic imperialism and the inevitable spread of Western, Eurocentric culture through globalization will be somewhat lessened by paying deliberate respect to local diversity and identity.

What is not discussed in this paper is why universities and colleges should even bother to consider developing globally competent teachers. I imagine that at least part of the answer must have something to do with whether we actually believe in the, perhaps utopian, idea of building a less divided global community:

In the end, educating for a global community has to do with attitude – the attitude that we relate to one another. That attitude among graduates will produce a more literate and thoughtful population. This will not occur, however, through special courses, but rather by changing the way academics think about their work.

In educating for a global community, three principles must dominate: to help students understand that we are all different, that we are all the same, and that we are all dependent on one another. Our students need to understand that a society sustains itself only to the extent that it celebrates the uniqueness of every individual. And, the last thing we can abide in an increasingly inter-dependent world is to ignore the diversity that makes us what we are and who we are. That difference has both cultural and individual components. We must help students understand a diversity that is both local and global.

(Boyer, ‘Opening Remarks’ in ACIE, 1994)

REFERENCES


Developing Globally Competent University Teachers

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Graham Badley has recently retired from his post as Director of the University Centre for Learning and Teaching at Anglia Polytechnic University. He has a long-standing interest in both the improvement of teaching and learning in higher education and in issues connected with international education. He now acts as an educational consultant and maintains an active research interest in staff and educational development.

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