The Impact of Lived Experiences of International Students on Understanding and Conceptualization of Equity

Hyacinth Skervin[*]
North West University in South Africa

Abstract

One of the social phenomena of the second half of the twentieth century is the internationalization of higher education. It is a phenomenon that is easily considered an offshoot of the neo-liberalism and globalization conditions that, it has been argued elsewhere, have dominated the second half of the last century. The internalization of higher education has served to expand at the same time it has served to signify the idea of a global space. By implication, internationalism creates a greater awareness of the global space and wherein the perception of this space is that it is a diffused one, there is bound to be within it panoply of views around such issues as equity and interpretations in relation to notions of fairness and social justice. It also means that such views are embodied in individuals and their collective groups who traverse that space in pursuit of higher education and underwriting their identity formations. The focus of this article is on differentiation in the conceptualization of equity as it relates to such groups. Emphasis is on how these conceptualizations have been constructed out of lived realities of experience that are as fluid as they are stable. Focus is also given to how these conceptualizations furnish motivations for reforms to higher education institutional discourse on equity on the one hand and more inclusive pedagogy on the other, and identifies challenges to be encountered in pursuing such reforms.

Keywords: *International education, higher education, equity, culture, academic discourse*

* Dr. Hyacinth Skervin is Post Doc Fellow at Faculty of Educational Sciences, North West University. Potchefstroom Campus South Africa. 2520 Tel. +27 (0)18 229 4769 and +27 (0) 84 631 0517. E-mail: hskervin@yahoo.com

Introduction

The three essential dimensions of meaning are associated with the concept of equity in higher education are enablement, diversity, and access. A fuller definition of equity would include legal promulgations that have to do with factors of non-discrimination and human rights which composite would be in tune with globally accepted interpretations. Despite the limitation, equity discourse in higher education is seen to undergird strategies and procedures for enabling and encouraging groups, especially those who are underrepresented, to be granted access and to exit successfully higher education institutional programs and areas of study (Faayke 2007, p.8). This equity discourse is also differentiated from an equality discourse, in that, it does not pretend to ask for precise measures, nor does it imply uniformity but is directed towards a correct, appropriate and systemic response to the diversity viewed as a function of individual differences and needs in the higher education system (Skilberg in Faakye 2007, p.8-9). Thirdly, this equity discourse refers to the nature of "access opportunities and procedures to fair and reasonable treatment" for diverse groups. Although, admittedly, partial to underrepresented groups in higher education, it is intended to enable the group's entry and successful progress whether in life or higher education itself.

Given these qualifications, an individual's general views on equity can be easily objectified whether explicitly and implicitly in any form of text that redacts that individual's society, social, and cultural history. That is, equity to the underrepresented individual can be expected to be different in meaning from the meaning of equity to a larger represented group or any other group. But it is also possible that such views are either shifting or that they are becoming fossilized as the individual continues to live in the realities of personal experiences affected by the dynamics of the global age. Therefore, it should not be uncommon if based on the lived experiences of the internationalized individual the notion that the globally space is actually a diffused space may seem contrary to the notion of universality. Conversely, it should not be surprising to find that the internationalized individual will just as heartily embrace the mantra of cosmopolitanism as the ethos of his or her lived experience within the global space.

Popke (2007, p.509) writes on possibilities within the nexus of the global space when the author elaborates on Immanuel Kant who in the final decades of the eighteenth century set forth a paradigmatic vision of the universal cosmopolitan condition among states. In this, there is a peaceful and universal community of all peoples of the earth coming into active relations with one another. Popke describes Kant's vision of cosmopolitanism as a political project, a kind of world citizenship within a federation of free and sovereign states and first step towards world peace. Popke continues that our current global modernity in political and economic relations is the closest we have come to Kant's vision. This is global modernity, particularly expressed in the interchange and movement of people, economy, and ideas across national boundaries and which in turn, have facilitated political and economic peace.

But is there really such a peace and are there truly such forms of the universal cosmopolitan condition and active relationships as Kant envisioned? There can be but partial yet still affirming answers to these questions. It may be argued for instance, that such semblances do exist especially in the scale and significance of geographic regions and the contingent concept of regionality. It is not new knowledge that at many regional or sub-regional levels are well established configurations of states identified under various acronyms of association or federation that allow their peoples to share mutual co-existence and co-dependence in the various aspects and areas of life. Similar arrangements at the supra-regional level, which in this case would involve different autonomous regions, could also be identified. But regionality does not necessarily include all states in a geographic region nor does it ensure common or equal responsibility and privileges to every individual within the space created by dint of a regional bloc or pact.

For depending on which configuration type is being used, there has commonly been the regional exclusion of states. Such partialities are generally indicated in references to, for example: 'marginal state', 'pariah state', 'failed state' and even 'lesser or weaker states' among other terms. Moreover, these designations are often accompanied by sets of sanctions deliberately or implicitly imposed on states for not belonging to or not maintaining conditions of status within the specific regional group. Any review of the yearly *failed state index* and ranking within the public or private realm such as those conceived by International Monetary Fund, World Bank, United Nations, Organization of the Americas and other preeminent but privately controlled entities with global or regional interests, gives examples of the not impartial criteria on which countries or states are so judged and treated. Thus, failed or fragile state measures are often based on the economic, social, or politically strategic viability of states and styles of governance in responding to the needs and wants of stronger states. Not surprisingly, such states are more often represented in the disguise of being unable to manage their own internal affairs in a satisfactory manner and are therefore in need of different forms of intervention as (Kirk, 2007, p.182).

In a critique of the United Nations Millennium Goals established in 2000 for instance, Amin (Monthly Review, 2006) writes further on the most vulnerable peripheral regions of the world and refers to the perception of them as *marginalized* regions in the new globalization. In specific reference to continental Africa as the most marginalized in this classification, the author argues how the non-alternative solution to getting out of this difficult classification is proscribed. In the author's summary of the millennium goals, it involves, inter alia: "*being more integrated' into globalization by a totally uncontrolled opening that will allow foreign capital 'to develop it' including such programs that 'fight against poverty''*. Further, the author argues that the primary impact from such intervention is the negation of power of national states to address their internal challenges when they subscribe to the objective requirements of globalization. Invariably this includes accommodating expansion of transnational capital and the neo-liberal agendas that drive it. It is such

marginalization of states and of the members within them that, although not quite dismissive of it, that confutes the utopian notion of universal cosmopolitanism.

But also within such experience of marginalization is at least one explanation for the diffusion of views that exists within the global space and justification for disparate ways of thinking on issues such as equity. This is also an explanation that can be further grounded in the socio-cultural history of those states, since such factors are contributive to the 'regional outcomes' in which the states find themselves at any time. Hence, one can also look for explanations in the historical and geographic backgrounds of individuals to understand in part how a particular cosmopolitan worldview is constitutive, has become radicalized, and differentiated from dominant or other indigenous viewpoints.

Writing on new social theory for example, Gregory (in Gregory, Martin and Smith 1989, p.79) articulates its variable approach in making social life intelligible by giving importance to the signs, symbols, and practices with which human beings communicate with one another and make meaning of their world. Social theory is encrusted within social life, that is, from within the context and encasements that shape peoples' local knowledge and the practical consequences of understanding, however universal some knowledge seem to be. Nor is social theory and the discourse that it eschews mindlessly unhinged but is always and everywhere grounded, constructed at particular sites to meet particular circumstances, and [therefore] deeply implicated in [the] constellations of power, knowledge, and spatiality. According to Gregory, *"social theory is interventional, is not immobile but in constant motion moving from one place to another and as it travels becoming freighted with a host of different assumptions that sometimes do not survive the journey intact".* Thus, international students moving from, towards, and within a host of different social context of place, knowledges, and relations engender particular sites of meaning and social constructions of theory. Contemporary cosmopolitanism falls within this genre of social theory that gives significance to the realities of the lived experience.

But this sum of influences do not negate the notion of *universal cosmopolitanism*, which from every indication is a mainstream viewpoint, but rather, it renders it reducible to summarize at best, a real but mostly physical reality. This is reality that is largely based on the global movement of people, a form of internationalism in that sense, than it is a stable construct indicating what Popke (2007) refers as a kind of world citizenship within a federation of free and sovereign states and first step towards world peace. Such a construction would become fragmented in attempts at conceptualization and signification. And it would remain mostly individuated in the interpretations were it to acknowledge those mitigating factors against and within states highlighting the inequalities and differences among people. This is because the consciousness of experience, unequal, differentiated, or otherwise, is known to have bearing on identity formation in different ways. For reference, still commonly accepted identity types - *moratorium, diffused and foreclosure,* for instance - that are associated with human recognizable characteristics in any contexts of experience are deemed psychosocial in nature and therefore

develop organically out of those experiences (Raphael, Feinberg and Bachor 1987). Thus, the distinguishing elements of subjectively occupational and ideological worldview, non-concern or indifference and crisis-cause-commitment to which the types are connected cannot be pre-empted that easily in order to conceive of a unifying sense of reality that is useful or applicable to all. Further, these are identity types nominally related to psychological health, which is necessary for survival and to build capacity to deal with the demands of life and living.

Thus, the aim in this article is to use the experiences of international students as embodiments of these contradictions and through this argument to account for limitations in discourses on equity in higher education. From this group are classifications of student identities formed broadly from juxtaposition of the social, political, and economic circumstances of students with consequent behaviors and philosophies through which they interpret and negotiate their world. A review of the diverse literature on international students and education points to causations of different student experiences but allows for little or no focus on student the identity formations and the implications that such experiences shape. Using findings from a set of previous research studies, the formation and development of four such types of identities are explained and how views on equity may be shaped by them. Higher education policy and pedagogical implications are linked to the meaning and significance from experiences in order to inform interpretative discourses on equity in higher education. By extrapolating and comparing the [constructive] elements of experience identified by the researchers of these studies, this method goes beyond establishing a relationship to the conventional types of identity mentioned earlier to establish more generic reasons for different views on equity. The selected researches were conducted with international students in different geographical locations and regions.

The researchers examined the experiences of international students from different perspectives and give focus to disparate effects from those experiences. Basic themes are centered around student dislocation and associated behaviors, background characteristics, the impact on global education, and transnational impact on higher education. The article continues with an exploration of the consequences in one case scenario and recounts a set of discursive propositions for further study.

Theoretical Framework

When examined from a critical theoretical perspective, the implications of globalization, neo-liberalism, social geography and history gives rise to the conceptualization of 'cosmopolitanism' as a worldview represented in a synthesis of mainstream and non-conventional viewpoints. For this reason, cosmopolitanism in the contemporary era is a multi dimensional reality and legitimate theoretical construct for discourse in higher education on the issue of equity. Secondly, representations of cosmopolitanism are delimited to provide substantive content for radical pedagogy on equity. Thirdly, although cosmopolitanism can be seen as a worldview and real life experience for many higher education students, it is shown how its conceptualization

is fraught with constraints and contradictions that influence the extent to which it is likely to influence discourses on equity.

The nature of the international student or his or her position taken does not discount the short term experiences of student volunteers, of students on overseas work experience, nor student from exchange programs. But general focus is given to higher education students on long or full term study in other national jurisdictions than their own. It is necessary to make the distinction as these students can be expected to have deeper and more disruptive experiences that require a longer process of adaptation and reordering in their lives. It is also a reasonable assumption that the vast majority of migrating and international students are from developing and newly developed countries as nationals from these countries are usually more in need of educational opportunities and possibilities and also that the recruitment market for international students is largest and more intense in developed countries.

According to Wiers-Jensson (2008, p.101), increased student mobility is an important part in the development of the modern society, which is one characterized by internationalization and globalization. Yet, the author reports that Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in *Education at a Glance 2005,* found that of the more than two million students worldwide studying outside of their home country the greater part of the flow was from developing to developed countries. In contrast, a much smaller, although also a substantial flow, takes place between the more developed Western countries. Similarly, a prominent UK study, (Lunn 2008, p.238) to which reference will again be made in this article, established the link between low student mobility in the UK and other western developed countries to wider social concerns within their societies. Among such concerns is the lack of a cosmopolitan and multilingual perspective among graduate students. The study goes on to emphasize the disadvantage that this poses to the national economies.

Identities and Cosmopolitanism

(I)

Sawir (2008) led an intensive-interview study on international student security in Australia and examined loneliness as a variable in the experiences of international students. In particular, the study posits that at least in the first few months of their sojourn, the experience of the greater majority of international students is one that is fraught with deep loneliness and isolation. This experience arises from three major problem issues acting together or separately and is generally exacerbated by the students' experiences at their institutional sites. They are that students are left with little or no contact with their families. Second, students experience a loss of social networks and third are cultural loneliness triggered by the absence of their preferred cultural and/or linguistic environment. The study goes on to explain the coping mechanisms that students employ. These may include identifying with "same-cultural" networks and engagement with local cultures that may or may not be recognized by their institution.

Suggestive in each of these scenarios and the coping mechanisms that the students employ are respectively, the sense of internal disruption to personal life and *cohesion* that the students experiences and the instinctive reaction to coalesce and reorder life within whatever setting is available to make this possible. Besides the sudden relational deficit of new international students, the authors emphasize the indeterminate state of the international student described by Grinberg (1989, p.23): as "one [that] ceases to belong to the world one left behind, and does not yet belong to the world in which one has truly arrived". The student's *reality* is a transpositional one in this period of personal life experience.

(II)
While Sawir et al (2008) underscores the deep negative experiences of the international student, other facets of experience such as background and motivation can be viewed more positively when, despite the drawbacks to social well-being, growing numbers of students are still choosing to study in international settings. In a recent study on international students' pathway to the United States, Lee (2008, p.308) employed survey and interview techniques to tract the different background characteristics of international students. The study found that (i) differentiated backgrounds correlate with differentiated information sources and reasons for international study and that (ii) those decisions for international study are strongly linked to geopolitical and global economic contexts and influences. Among them are the aggressive marketing strategies that are used to *recruit* and *retain* capable international students. These include international recruiters, incentive program offers, financial study program packages, and changing immigrations policies that have all been found to be competitive practices especially within developed countries. Capable students in turn respond to these opportunities for self development and achievement by seeking them out and exploiting them.

A second set of causes are linked to rising higher employment opportunities in developing countries. This growth has arisen in tandem with the possibilities or at least perceptions of such that are created through national and regional participation in the global society and economy. A third geopolitical and economic factor that Lee (2008, p.308) mentions is specifically linked to the directions of flow of international students. It is also a factor that is generally associated with the extent and quality of higher education accessibility, social accommodation, and the bearing these have on student preferences with respect to a specific country or region in pursuit of their studies. Such directional flows may also be influenced by intra-governmental relations. According to Lee, student preferences are exercised regardless of any knowledge of the exact locations in which the students will live - a factor that the previous study suggests has significant bearing on the lived experience itself.

(III)
In a third study by Lunn (2008), focus is given to developing an agenda for global perspectives in higher education in the United Kingdom and indirectly highlights the problem of social and environmental marginalization. The study, commissioned by the British Government's Department for International Development (DFID) was

designed to set out a framework for exploring the limits of the international study experience. The study concluded with two trajectories for thought and action. The first is that global perspectives are to be integrated in local educational activities of teaching, learning, research, curriculum, curriculum development, and other institutional activities. Content knowledge and skill in cultural understanding, languages, technologies, and global issues such as environment, immigration, and international markets are considered integral to the useful and effective for carrying out those activities. The second trajectory is that any examination of the global dimensions of educational activities in higher education including the curriculum requires integration with global and international issues. These activities involve overseas student recruitment, widening the participation in the United Kingdom to ethnic minorities, and deepening partnerships involving the delivery of programs between the countries, student, faculty, and researcher exchanges.

The study was conducted with two specific goals in mind: to devise a plan in higher education that would enable students to develop knowledge about different places and cultures of the world that intersect with global issues, problems, and events of the past present and future. Second, this is a plan that is intended to make students more aware of different ways of thinking about the world, its contemporary issues and in order to cultivate values, attitudes, and skills to equip the students for active local and global citizenship. Findings from the study showed that the majority of students in the UK and other developed countries have "poor" general knowledge and awareness of global issues such as sustainable development. There was also widespread ignorance of world affairs and lack interest beyond their own internal situation, poor knowledge and experience of other territories and regions, and little knowledge of the interconnectedness of international markets.

(IV)
A fourth reason for cosmopolitan identity formation is more clearly presented in the study by Mary Dixon (2006, p.319). The author examined the "multiple shifting positioning" of participants, agency, and identity within the globalize space of higher education. The Thai and Australian policy focused research was conducted with respect to an international higher education doctoral program and the students, lecturers, and policy makers who cross national and virtual borders to participate in it. Emphasis is placed on the intertwined relationship between globalization and international higher education: the latter conventionally associated with specific activities including distance education, offshore and onshore courses, and establishment of overseas campuses in residence and in-between. But the author also emphasizes the impact of neo-liberalism in its effect on higher educational institutions and practices and the knowledge those institutions disseminate. In particular, such impact is manifested in the transformation of the traditional social purposes and functions of universities into market driven enclaves fully positioned to participate in the global marketplace and thereby reshape institutional purposes and quality of knowledge production within it.

At the same time, globalization itself has its own dynamics that generate it own results. As one of its defining characteristics according to this post-structural construction, globalization is neither fixed nor stable: nor is it certain but consists in "flows of networks" that transcend time, space, subjectivity, and agency. Its capacity is in the overarching use of technology to compressed these factors and reorganize power and positions through the constant exchange between the social actors who are involved in the processes. Another characteristic is the contribution to the construction of hybrid identities as a result of those unstable and unbounded spatial understandings. (Dixon, 2006, p.320; see also Peterson and Monnier 2007, p.3-17). Dixon argues,

> Globalization is constructed from/by/on participants who are (dis)located. It is in this (dis)location - the feeling of being neither here nor there yet also of being here and there (Usher, 2002, p.50)- that understandings of self and globalization are constructed.

Unlike Lee, Dixon sees the disruptions as external and it is the individual who is at the centre of control, who manipulates the unstable environment to shape a responsive reality.

Motivations and Indications

While there appears to be only partial convergence on identity formation in the four scenarios that have been described, it does not preclude the possibility that a student may be a product of all four situations at one time. All four studies represented the international student in different context of internationalism. Further, which factor is most important at a given time would be subjectively determined and requires a value judgment primarily because the motivations of international students, whether long-term or short-term, converge differently - especially around the issue of labour. The Weirs-Jenssens (2008, p.102) study found economic rationales to be the most pronounced reasons for international education among short-term exchange students for example. At the same time, the students see immense value in the cultural exposure and education they received from their international experiences. But identifiable factors of influence and student response in each study provide more clues as to the external-internal motivations and incentives that have impact on the student's attitude. In this regard, established critical theories in higher education discourses are useful to conceptualize these relationships and the interconnectivities within them if its a priori method of selecting subjectivities is applied. These can be presented as follows:

Factors of Influence	Components in Identity Formation	Attitudinal Effects
Relational deficit (I)	Personal autonomy, re-socialization, intransigence, individuation, footloose	Critical standpoint, neutralism
Marketization (II)	Previous knowledge, experiential knowledge	Mainstream (sympathizers), hegemonism, pseudo subalterns
Personal marginalization (III)	Social and geographic discrimination	Antiracism, anticolonialism, outsider insider binaries
Opportunism (IV)	Migration, personal achievement, self development	Feminism, progressive liberalism, neoliberalism

The response behaviours of students experiencing relational deficit suggest that while there are negative connotations associated with their sense of disembodiment there are other meaningful acquisitions from the experience. Students are forced to develop personal autonomy, to recreate new identity in the new setting and acquire a composition of skills for personal adjustment on terms that serve their individual needs and purposes. A second conclusion is that whether long term or short term, international students are likely to establish themselves as foreigners staying for a time but as neither inside nor outside their locales. On the other hand, being cognizant of this fact, the international student may also choose and has chosen to develop personas that to wit [will] shape for them any perceived long-term possibilities and opportunities in the new setting. Further, because these personas represent discrete identities that the student may don at any convenient time and when the student deems it fit, they provide the student with motive for a looser commitment to the resident environment and a perceived freedom to make choices about identity and philosophies that are more reflective of these experiences or the way in which they think about and choose to use them.

Further, given the amount of freedom and consequently relative disengagement to which students are susceptible under the conditions of international study, there are at least two salient arguments to contest. The first is whether or not such conditions under which students study serve to facilitate or reinforce already established dogma, pre-conceptualizations, and predispositions on equity. The second argument is the extent to which students' international sojourns and experiences influence change in their thinking and perceptions about equity. For whereas the categories of students who benefit from international study share in common the experience of internationalism and develop in the process personas replicating the trans-cultural influences and other infusions in their identities, it may be assumed that within this category of students are variations based on many social mitigating factors that may have or may not have impact on the students' thinking about equity.

Factors of race, ethnicity, socio-economic background, and culture have provided much of the material on which equity discourses have been built and are even further anchored to broader contemporary discourses in antiracism, anti-colonialism, feminism among others. Still, it is debatable the extent to which these factors play a meaningful role in the experiences of international students when there

are other more immediate factors and especially the "relational deficit" that seems to bear greater impact on their experiences to the extent that they may have even replaced these more conventional factors in significance. For example, relational deficit, as defined, is strongly connected to one of the premises implied in Lee's (2008, p.319) study of international student pathway to the United States. That is, there is at least a causal relationship between international students' experience and a lack of previous knowledge about the socio-cultural, political, and economic settings in which the students study. However, students from more developed societies who share comparative socio-cultural backgrounds were still more likely to have more of this extant knowledge and skills to negotiate their sojourn in a developed country such as their own.

Given over time the new personal experiences and development of personas in internationalism as a result of their experiences, any student is disposed to evaluating notions of equity within the framework of experiential internationalism and otherwise form judgments accordingly. Lee (2008) for example, recounts cases of the initial disappointment and unmet expectations regarding academic programs to which students have been admitted, the lack of social events, and the small parochial settings of institutions and living community that students often encounter. The author claims that to counter the disillusionment, students often resolved to fulfill their commitment in continuing study at the institution and come to value more their socio-cultural differences while using it further to re-shape their personas. But students with previous knowledge of institutional settings from previous travels or culled from more comprehensive knowledge sources, have easier experiences although they likewise add to their identity personas from the new integration process. Therefore any assessment of those new or modified identities and the substance of which they are made can be measured in terms of how students continue to shape their own lived experiences while they study, the decisions they make, and the causes to which they commit themselves. Similarly, any impact in thinking about equity is expected to be reflected in these behaviours and attitudes.

Implications from the insider outsider binary are more distinct when extended to the insider various positions and locations of the different groups of participants in international higher education provide a third premise for contrasting behaviours and identities. For instance, Dixon (2006. p.321) describes policy makers as insiders whose voices are heard most as they prevail in the discourse on policy research and forms of text. Conversely, policy actors such as lecturers and doctoral candidates are the outsiders whose voices ideally are either unheard or silenced in international/globalization policy analyses. But as Dixon points, it is often not the case that all outsider voices are similarly sanctioned especially if any of the parties has already gained internationally competitive acceptance and status inside the educational arena. In the Thai-Australian binary of policy actors in Dixon's research for example, it is the Australians who have the (stronger) voices over the Thais, given their reputation and status in the international education pecking order.

Like the contrary effects of globalization that have been discussed, Dixon example further underscores the reasons for and how high is the probability that many an international student embodies contradictory and unpredictable positions of identity. It is also where social intersections such as race, gender, ethnicity, education, and culture may be alternatively the most useful or the least effective in delimiting the various views on equity among this group to indicate how students will participate in discourses about equity. The globally knowledgeable student for example, may embody the silent or marginalized viewpoint on an issue of local, national, or mainstream debate despite the fact that the student may share or fit socially into the mainstream group as will be seen in the example on sustainable development which follows. Similarly, the globally constructed or rather the globally "(dis)located" individual may have reason to align him/herself with mainstream views on the one hand or with marginalized viewpoints on the other. A socially constructed ethnic, racial, or cultural minority who is benefiting from globalization in personal status and power is less likely to identify in any meaningful way with a local minority who is similarly socially constructed but experiencing the reverse side of globalization.

Another aspect of the theory underscoring these changing roles of individuals in international context is "positioning". Dixon (2006, p.321) uses this explanation from social constructivism to argue that where there are power differentials between the constructed groups, the positioning of each group are expressed in fluidly shifting positions rather than in fixed roles. That is, people use fluid positioning to explain the situations in which they find themselves at any point in time. The positional theory perspective according to Dixon also gives access to multiple positions and relationships in which we operate and permits recognition of their shifting nature. The author continues that positioning "involves a tripolar relationship of position, story lines, and speech-acts evident within the conversation" - a conversation in which others and the self are intentionally or unintentionally positioned through multi-layered story lines and the speech-acts that reflect them.

Thus, positions are relative to one another, and self-positioning may force another's position. Likewise a speaker or writer for that matter can choose to draw on the story lines that are made available in the conversation as well as draw from the broader set of "embedded discursive actions as those linked to for example historical exploitations and neo-colonialism. Positioning theory therefore explains why marginalized vulnerable groups in 'fixed' resident populations tend towards victimized and indigenous constructions of identity in respect of their social and other causes. Where the marginalization and vulnerability in identity changes, the positioning shifts to less of victimhood to identification with the mainstream discourse. The implication for international students is that their positioning is also subject to change depending on their new experiences in conversation. It is possible that an otherwise mainstream individual in his/her own home context come to identity with being marginalized and victimized in his her new setting of experiences and relationships and vice versa. But it is also possible for individuals to live outside of the narrative conventions as Dixon (2006, p.322) describes it by producing their own social episodes and story lines that carry the weight of authenticity and legitimacy.

This identification and positioning has a built-in capacity to question and challenge dominant positioning and story lines and to influence its shift for example in bringing globalization or alternatively regionalism perspectives to a dominant hegemonic discourse. The results may tend towards rejection of what may be considered radical or the result may be joint story lines as the potential for equity education on sustainability shows.

Implication for Pedagogy

These four studies foreground the advantage that international students have from their previous knowledge and global awareness of contemporary global issues. This includes the knowledge of the dynamics and impact of international markets or sustainable development that often affect their territories and regions in ways that are stark and felt. In many instances these effects are also sufficient to explain their forays into international education as Lee's (2008, p.308) study points out. International students also have the capacity to sharpen and inform their indeginism, that is, their previous knowledges and ways of knowing with new knowledge generated in the new environments and from discussions around the issues that are intricately linked to their lives and lived experiences. Such depth and comprehensiveness in knowledge can be assumed and to help in shaping students views and understanding around issues of equity. The subject of sustainable development provides an example of issues in conceptualization and of what equity would imply for at least one category of international students.

James Rice (2007), of New Mexico State University conducted research on the topic: Ecological Unequal Exchange: Consumption, Equity, and Unsustainable Structural Relationships within the Global Economy. He outlines the social inequalities that arise from transnational economic exchange of environmental resources between less developed countries (LDC's) that are primarily ex-colonies, and more developed countries (MDC's). Using forestry as an example, James argues that the economic methods and higher demand nature of the transaction of MDCs have forced peripheral LDC countries into becoming extractive economies resulting in higher levels of bio-capacity depletion from over-resource extraction and lower levels of resource utility and economic returns. In turn, the small economic gains are not sufficient to provide funding for social-economic and sustainable development programs. On the other hand MDCs are experiencing higher levels of bio-conservation and resource utility and lower levels of resource extraction due to higher purchases and product consumption of the LDC resource. MDCs therefore enjoy greater pretense at sustainable development because their material degradation cost is under-written by LDCs.

Issues on equity, ethics, and morality around resource extraction as they relate to sustainable development in MDCs are brought into question with this kind of information. In particular, it has implications for values and content teaching in the regular school curriculum as well as for course content for post-secondary education from many disciplinary perspectives. For example, content is implicated in broad

fields of knowledge such as history, environmental studies, environmental law, physical and human geography, social studies, economics, and any other where information and data such as Rice presented would be relevant. In addition, the question that needs to be answered in terms of (in) equity and societal values would be: which values or which value systems are implicated in the economic exploitation and marginalization of LDCs. Would it be the consumer choice right in MDC's, which has arisen because of the 'productization' of natural resources into diverse arrays of value-added products?

Other questions may be asked about the efficacy of the pursuit of 'wealth and happiness' as a value when and if pursued to its logical conclusion it deprives others of similar pursuits. A third set of questions would give consideration to the value of industry or industriousness as previously mentioned. MDCs that enjoy high division of labour and income levels present their workers with reasons to be industrious. The incentives are the multiple available jobs due to product and service diversification and the higher incomes from the production and sale of value added goods – the proceeds of which are spent to improve the quality of life. Fewer such opportunities and possibilities are available to extractive countries that have shipped off both product and service opportunities in the raw material they export.

To the globally sensitive internationalist, addressing equity issues requires adjusting or modifying the extremities of those values. Using the above example, it could be discussed that shared processing and production or sharing the proceeds from production on equitable terms would be one way of contributing to trans-global equity not to mention helping to activate those moribund socio-economic capacities in the LDCs. The lesson on equity for purposes of education is that fundamental societal values will need to be challenged openly. Anything less for equity education will barely amount to rearranging the arguments a wall with very little effect on challenging the structures that create social disparities and their consequences in the broader global society. Needless to say the global internationalist will not be impressed by anything less.

Case Study

One of the common manifestations of contradiction and inconsistency in equity discourse is in the instructional and learning interchange that takes place when internationally oriented activities or an international input in an activity is being questioned. Emphasis on structural or cultural diversity or in looking for homogeneity and convergence with what is mainstream, are two sides of the same practice. Another approach is treating internationalism and suchlike experiences as merely ideas to be acknowledged as contributive, in partnership or simply marginal to the given subject. Cowan (2003, p.275-283) in relation to the concept of global citizenship disparages both forms of practice in education as undermining the relativity of difference and notions of equity that would inform practice about democratization especially because internationalism and multiculturalism are generally viewed from the perspectives of commodity. In a study of equity in higher education systems in North America

(Skervin, 2008), for example, it was found that modern Canadian society and socio-cultural philosophy was developed in collaboration with the public and private realms and is based on the notion of social diversity operationalized through the visibility of representation. In contrast, higher education in the USA is based on the notion of accessibility through tier-level accommodation made possible through various points of student entry into the higher education systems.

In the case of Canada in particular, diversity was further made to happen at the policy level in the espousal of cultural plurality that was and continues to be pursued. In particular, policies [in support of] bilingualism, federated governance, state welfarism, social ethnicism, and social diversity are pursued to 'guarantee' equality of opportunity and to bring returns in contributions to society's development, the effectiveness notwithstanding. Thus Canada continues to be a consumer of internationalism and of what this signifies in dominant economic societies, of which it is a member. This represents on the one hand, the global consolidation and merchandizing of international education with the consequential disparities this serves to create in weaker economies (See also Cooke, 2008, p.23-24) from the recruitment and retention processes as Lee's (2008, p.308) study also found. At the same time, the policy theoretically subscribes to a [national] equity discourse that appears in part, reasonably sound.

In the same participant research study, the use of both frameworks of explanations and interpretations was witnessed in higher education classroom discussions intended to locate the nation's place and the extent of its participation in the [global] equity discourse. Not surprisingly, seemingly non-mobile students have entirely different constructions. In one class discussion experience, for example, the conceptualization of the global citizen and global citizenship amounted to owing the national passport that is believed to provide unbounded accessibility to other countries based on the latter's perception of the passport as indicating a "peaceful" nation. No doubt, the nation's reputation for social harmony in diversity has preceded it in the estimation of these students. Obviously missing from this construction however, is the notion and worth of global participation, whether these are derived from globally lived, study, or working experiences but which would have provided weighty comparisons and more qualified knowledge about the meaning of global citizenship. By including such considerations, a richer relationship between global citizenship and perspectives on equity would have been established.

It is not unreasonable then, to make the assumption then that non-mobile students embody more limited conceptualization of equity given the earlier arguments on student mobility in western developed countries (Lunn 2008, p.238). One of the conclusions from Lunn's study was that student mobility correlates with greater general knowledge about and interest in global issues, world affairs, and more cosmopolitan attitudes. Intimate knowledge of other societies is also correlated to student mobility and the bearing that has on conceptualizations of equity. This is also where the intersections of gender, race, and ethnicity may prove to have less significance and implication on differentiated notions of equity than do socio-

economic class or education. For equity education for the international student is forged in experience and is open to many sources of knowledge. In that, it is open to the formal scholarly variety in course programs and literature but also to implicit and incidental knowledge attained from a variety of other means such as casual observations and insights, informal and informal interrelationships, organic ways of understanding and deductive rationalities. For the most part, such useful knowledge and dialectic appears imprisoned in this group yet is potent in its effect from the seemingly silent voices of the subalterns who this group most closely represents. According to Asgharzadeh (2008), subalternity is for the most part a discourse around voice, silence, speech, knowledge and the intersections of these in new contexts. But at the same time, the very presence and perceive needs of this transient group influence discourse, dialogue, and action that must either seek to liberate, oppress, oppose or accommodate further thinking about equity.

Conclusion

A look at how views of equity are shaped in international experience is mainly seem through the theme of spatial differentiation but can be transferred to other experiences relating to equity resulting from say ethnicity, gender, religion. This is to imply that awareness of marginality based on social classifications is an acquired experience that rises or diminishes according to place and the social and cultural practices within them. It means further that *broad* education rather than ethnocentric education - is a mitigating mechanism against parochialism in shaping an effective equity discourse for institutional or pedagogical purposes, whether or not such education brings economic rewards. The consolation in this in striving for acceptance and whatever else the international student justly seeks within a location bring to fore the limitations within that space. The proclivities to disaffection, disillusionment, idealism or that these limitations engender can be countered by broadening and absorbing knowledge to result in shifting views and identities about place and self as well as on equity. Nothing in this is contrary to Wagner's (2007, p.114-117) notions of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism associated with the children of immigrants in The United States. The former implies the apparent forming of personal identities from a broadening attachment to localities wherever they may be while the latter implies detachment from any locality to the extent that any locality can be equally called home. In the latter case an inner equilibrium state in identity formation has already been achieved but not necessarily in the romanticized way that Wagner suggests: in that detachment is the result of nostalgia for some ideal homeland. On the contrary, detachment can just as well be the result of realizing that there are no ideal contexts for personal identification and pursuing the ends that an individual seeks but that all contexts allows for approximations of that ideal in some way. Therefore, in countering the boundaries of local limitations, the true internationalist does have choice to be one or the other.

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About the Author

Dr. Skervin has secondary school teaching (Jamaica and Canada) and teacher assessment (Jamaica) background and completed her doctoral degree in Teacher Education at the University of Cincinnati, USA , 2004. Her research areas are culture in education, equity in higher education, intersection of culture with educational equity.