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‘Learning to See the Person, not the Culture or the Faith’: Critical Reflections on Internationalising Higher Education in Israel

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Abstract

Experiences of a European Union project on internationalisation of Israeli higher education motivated the author to consider the value of a pedagogy of discomfort in a politically conflicted context. The transparent articulation of her values, beliefs and learning and teaching experiences in multicultural environments enabled her to facilitate the Israelis to interrogate their pedagogical practices. This process led to the integration of internationalisation of the curriculum principles and a social justice agenda into several programmes,

Key Words

Internationalisation of higher education; Israel; pedagogy of discomfort; internationalisation of the curriculum

Introduction

Higher education in Israel is where many students have their first contact with those outside their faith and/or ethnic community (Arar, 2012; Abu-Rabia-Queder&Arara, 2011) even though far fewer Arab students than Jewish students are accepted into higher education (Arar, 2015). There is, therefore, the potential for the sector to foster greater understanding of diversity in this conflicted region (Bar-Shalom, Diab & Rousseau, 2008) and to develop curricula that embed a social justice agenda. Being in the same classroom, however, does not necessarily reduce tensions.

Educators need to be willing to facilitate interaction in a "professional, controlled and protected manner" (ibid, p.10) and to work to encourage pedagogical reciprocity, a process by which "both sides are prepared to move toward each other" (Jansen, 2009, p.268) and pedagogical presence (Barcena Orbe, 2012). Such a process can develop out of a pedagogy of discomfort (Boler, 1999; Boler & Zembylas, 2003) through which students – and educators – are encouraged to critique "their deeply held assumptions" and destabilise "their view of themselves and their worlds" (Leibowitz, Bozalek, & Rohleder, 2010, p.84). A pedagogy of discomfort necessitates a "process that is painful, but contains the promise of hope for the future" (ibid). For me, these concepts and, indeed, the pedagogical practices advocated, resonate with the postcolonial concept of "unhomeliness" (Manathunga, 2007, p.93), the discomfort that can be felt when we encounter values, beliefs, behaviours - new cultural practices - that appear alien to our own. Remaining with the discomfort and opening up a dialogue with the 'other' to explore why we each hold the positions that we do, creates a powerful space for new learning to occur. A pedagogy of discomfort thus has the potential to nurture pedagogical reciprocity and a pedagogy of presence, through unsettling "cherished beliefs about the world" (Zembylas, 2015, p.164) to contribute to social justice education.

In this article I share critical reflections on my involvement as a Work Package (WP) leader on a European Union (EU) Tempus project Fostering International Cooperation with Higher Education Colleges in Israel (IRIS) http://www.braude.ac.il/tempus/. I articulate how I was able to draw on my research on internationalisation of higher education and my experience of teaching in various countries to facilitate the Israeli partners to interrogate their pedagogical practices, to confront some of the complexities of their context that are manifested in the higher

education environment and to engage in a pedagogy of discomfort. I will:

- Use my experience as a partner on the IRIS project to articulate the complexities of internationalising higher education in Israel
- Locate my experiences within the Israeli education system through an overview of its intricacies
- Analyse how the concepts of a pedagogy of discomfort can be used to develop pedagogical reciprocity/a pedagogy of presence in order to effect greater understanding between people who are often in conflict with each other
- Share the tensions that I experienced in working in the complex Israeli context, tensions that have engendered further important learning about internationalisation of higher education–my substantive area of research - and about myself

'Internationalisation' – and the Israeli higher education context

Before outlining the IRIS project and describing the Work Package in more detail, I begin by discussing internationalisation and providing some background information about the Israeli environment, more specifically, about education and higher education. Internationalisation of higher education continues, appropriately, to be a term that resists a consensual definition because of changing perceptions over time and context (Whitsed and Green, 2013). Hawawani, (2011), critiques, in particular, Knight & de Wit's (1995) oft quoted definition of internationalisation as embedding an international dimension into the teaching, research, quality assurance and service functions of a university as being "too narrowly defined" (Hawawani 2011, p.5). In addition, "there is also a trend to emphasise the need for a strategic, integrated, transformative and/or comprehensive internationalisation" (Author et al. 2016, p.27). More latterly, these 'Western', indeed Anglocentric, conceptualisations of

internationalisation that have been dominant for several years are being retheorised to be more relevant to 'non-Western' contexts (see for example Cheung, 2012; Aziz & Abdulla, 2013). Moreover, Zeleza (2012, p.3) argues for "more empowering knowledges for the south and symmetrical forms of internationalization in higher education" as a way of "decentering the hegemonic stranglehold of the Eurocentric epistemological order". What these more recent definitions have in common is the plea to universities to be driven by a desire to learn from the world and to extend the spatiality of the university, to "integrate the institution into the emerging global knowledge economy rather than integrate an international dimension into the existing institutional setting" (Hawawini, 2016, p.5), a fitting, if ambitious, objective in the Israeli setting.

As a project partner, I learned quickly that conceptualising internationalisation in Israel is especially complex because of its "heterogenic, segregated populations" and because the "international dimension can be complicated as the 'other' or 'foreigner' can refer to those who are not of the country's majority population" (Cohen, Yemini & Sadeh, 2014, p.26). This majority population is 80% Jewish with the Palestinian Arabs constituting the largest minority group. The complexity of those identifying as Palestinian Arabs consists of several elements, "citizenship (Israeli), nationality (Palestinian), ethnicity (Arab), way of life (city-dwellers, farmers, villagers, Bedouin-nomads) and religion (Islamic, Christian or Druze). These identity elements are charged with conflict" (Flum & Kaplan, 2016, p.91) as I grew to understand. Most children are educated in four distinct school systems – secular Jewish, religious Jewish, Palestinian Arab and ultra – orthodox Jewish – and, although all Israeli citizens are entitled to receive education provided by the state without any distinction being made between the ethnic and faith groups, "schools for Palestinian-Arab

children offer fewer facilities and educational opportunities than are offered to other Israeli children" (Yemini, 2014, p.477). Such a segregated system in which some groups are privileged over others results, not surprisingly, in a lack of understanding and respect for the 'other' (Wolff & Breit, 2012). In contrast, the higher education system accommodates all faith and ethnic groups, with Jewish, Muslim and Christian students attending Israeli universities and colleges (Arar, 2012). As I explain later, this outwardly inclusive environment of higher education was what persuaded me to agree to be named on the EU project proposal. I soon realised, however, that, as in other contexts in which I work, being in the same classroom and environment does not necessarily mean that learners – and educators – communicate in ways that enable them to learn from and about each other. Indeed, much of my research on international higher education has explored how our learning, teaching and assessment practices can be reconceptualised and reframed to ensure a learning environment that is vibrant, reciprocal, celebratory of diversity and thus inclusive (e.g. Author, 2011, 2013, 2015). Several of the partners were striving to foster such learning environments but there were other barriers that prevented people from studying together, interacting and learning about each other in higher education. One such barrier is language:

> Academic teaching in Israeli universities and most colleges assumes advanced level of both Hebrew and English. Because most of their schooling is in their native Arabic, some potential students may find the language requirements and experience in class too daunting…The language challenge may drive such students to look for a local college…with Arabic as the teaching language or to migrate to a higher education institution in an Arabic speaking country (Flum & Kaplan, 2016, p.92).

Further, Palestinian Arabs/Bedouin tend to live in more traditional, collectivist societies that continue to be inherently patriarchal:

> The status of Arab women is still far from that of Arab men…. there is a collision between modernization and the fetters of tradition. Alongside modernization processes, deeply rooted social patterns and traditional values that have endured for generations are very intensely preserved (A'li & Da'as, 2016, p.79).

Arab women in Israeli higher education can, therefore, lack models of Muslim womanhood (Erdreich, 2016). Such was the landscape that I stepped into in 2013 when I became a partner on the IRIS project in which there were six Israeli higher education colleges and a Palestinian Arab one.

Internationalising higher education in Israel: the IRIS project

In January 2012, I was invited to consent to be named on a project proposal to the EU that aimed to encourage several higher education colleges in Israel to engage with internationalisation. The proposal writers believed that, because of my research and teaching experience (see, for example, Author, 2011), I would be able to lead and support the Israeli partners to develop internationalised curricula - including the development of intercultural skills and cultural capability - and to initiate and support practitioner research in learning and teaching in international higher education. I hesitated before agreeing to be named on the proposal. Politically, I have long been sympathetic to the cause of the Palestinian people and I was, therefore, unsure about whether to become involved, concerned as to whether I would be compromising my integrity by doing so. On the other hand, I relish challenge and was somewhat seduced by the potential of such a project, having learned from experience that it is through working in a context that I am able to make a more informed judgment about

its complexities. I did some careful research into the participating colleges and inferred, from their websites, that they were institutions where students of all faiths and ethnicities were taught together. In addition, one was a Palestinian Arab college. Moreover, I learned that these were second-tier institutions with degree awarding powers, striving to re-position themselves in a higher education system dominated by its universities (Yemini et al. 2015). I concluded that my participation in a project that was striving to 'internationalise' higher education in this context could be an opportunity to influence that process in a small but positive way – and agreed to be named on the grant proposal. The proposal was successful and the IRIS project began in 2012, ending in 2016. There were seven Israeli higher education colleges and several European partners involved in the project. The overall goals of the IRIS project were to:

- Foster academic international relations in Israeli colleges
- Promote education, research and innovation
- Improve the academic quality as well as the status and competitiveness of public colleges vis-à-vis universities and private colleges through the development of internationalism capabilities and culture in the colleges

I was the only UK partner and my role was as the leader of the Work Package (WP) Internationalisation of the Curriculum (IoC).

Prior to the first meeting of the partners in Tel Aviv in 2013, I established the overall aims of the WP as:

- To provide an understanding of how international policies and new social and economic contexts of higher education impact/mediate teaching, learning and administrative practices

- To engage critically with the policy debates and theoretical ideas that underpin teaching, learning and assessment in higher education and relate these to local contexts
- To articulate the complexities of intercultural communication and relationships and to identify ways to enhance cultural capability
- To identify the academic and personal support needs of students in global higher education
- To enable participants to share experiences and apply debates to their own context and practice

In order to achieve these aims, I planned and led three workshops in Israel between November 2013 and May 2014 and wrote and produced a publication *Internationalisation of the curriculum: concepts and working practices*, to complement them. This publication was translated into Arabic and Hebrew. The three workshops were designed and structured to encourage the maximum sharing of experiences, to identify obstacles to internationalising curricula and making progress towards doing so in myriad ways. All of the activities were designed so that participants could use them in 'cascading' internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC) processes in their institutions. I also held a fourth and final workshop in Israel in November 2015 with the aim of sharing successes, identifying ways in which to sustain them and develop further collaborations. Later in the article, I give a critically reflective overview of the workshops, illustrating how they integrated concepts of a pedagogy of discomfort and, in addition, how several partners rose to this challenge to investigate their own assumptions, values – and prejudices. By doing so, I hope to illustrate the usefulness of this conceptual framework in the complex environments that constitute 21st century higher education.

Caveat

I am expressing my personal views and experiences of being a WP leader on this EU project. I am sharing my emotional responses to, and innermost thoughts about, the processes that I initiated and in which I was involved. The partners have not had the opportunity to read and comment on what I have written and their perspectives will – or may be - different from mine. I trust, however, that I have written about the critical events in a respectful way rather than claiming my perspectives on them as any kind of truth for others. Laying bare my "innermost thoughts and concerns" (Armstrong, 2008, npn) renders me vulnerable and susceptible to a criticism of self-indulgence. I contend, however, that, by adhering to principles of autoethnography, an approach that connects "self with others, self with the social and self with the context" (Njunjuri et al., 2010, p.3), my writing has the potential to resonate with others who may then be moved to reflect critically on their experiences and, perhaps, act accordingly in similar circumstances. Such a process parallels that which I went through as the WP leader and disclosing it was illuminating for many of the partners. Sharing my discomfort motivated others to share theirs, which led to uncomfortable, challenging but ultimately constructive conversations and actions, providing an example of how separating the personal from the professional is no longer useful in academic life. We need to be aware of our own values and beliefs and where they are challenged by alternatives, if we are to function effectively in our complex, multi-layered environments (see, for example, Author, 2015).

Insider/outsider?

In any context, including my local one, I do not see myself as either an insider or an outsider, rather as someone who moves, constantly, between those positions. In Israel,

however, I felt, strongly, that I was an outsider. This gave me some licence to ask questions about situations that I found baffling (Kelly, 2014) but, at the same time, I was cautious about being too critical of the political situation. I did not want to be accused of speaking in an unconsidered way, from a 'not knowing' position and thus rendering my voice as lacking legitimacy. Having established at the first meeting in Tel Aviv, however, that I had been ambivalent about agreeing to be named on the project proposal and being asked to explain why, I had an early opportunity to be transparent about my political sympathies. This transparency enabled robust conversations from the outset and, I believe established a climate for the sometimes uncomfortable yet ultimately constructive dialogue that followed. One of the partners issued the challenge that, as an outsider, I would be more able to see 'what needed doing' in their context, a challenge about which I was sceptical but which, nonetheless, I accepted.

I began to devour books and articles about Israel – many of which are drawn on in this article. At a later stage in the project, I was fortunate to meet Khawla Abu-Baker and to learn about – and subsequently read - her controversial book written with Dan Rabinowitz *Coffins on our shoulders: the experience of the Palestinian citizens of Israel* in which, as a Palestinian woman and a Jewish man, the authors reflect on their personal histories to present a narrative that "presents a Palestinian endorsing a representation configured by an Israeli, and an Israeli embracing a rendition constructed by a Palestinian" (Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005, p.18). I read Shlomo Sand's *How I stopped being a Jew* and Ari Shavit's *My promised land.* I became aware that I was in danger of developing an obsession with the country, yet, at the same time, I continued to feel ambivalent and tense about compromising my own values:

> I am aware of living in one of the most racist societies in the Western world…. in Israel it (racism) exists deep within the spirit of the laws. It is taught in schools and colleges, spread in the media (Sand, 2014, p.98).

These words shocked me. What kind of society teaches racism in schools and colleges? Would my colleagues in the UK see me as colluding in 'teaching racism'? My ambivalence about working in Israel continued but, at the same time, I was developing close relationships with the Israeli and Palestinian Arab partners that were enabling me to begin to understand, in more nuanced ways, the extraordinary intricacies of the 'political situation'.

Pedagogy of discomfort

The term 'pedagogy of discomfort' was coined by Megan Boler in 1999 and defined succinctly by her as "a teaching practice that can encourage students to move outside their 'comfort zones' and question their 'cherished beliefs and assumptions'" (Boler 1999, p.176). The concept has since been extended by Boler and Zembylas (2003) and by Zembylas and Boler (2002) now, importantly, paying more explicit attention, to the 'discomfort' of the academic/educator in addition to that of the student:

> A pedagogy of discomfort…is grounded upon the idea that discomforting feelings are valuable in challenging dominant beliefs, social habits and normative practices that sustain social inequities and thus create openings for individual and social transformation. A major requirement, then, of pedagogy of discomfort is that students and teachers are invited to embrace their vulnerability and ambiguity of self and therefore their dependability on others (Zembylas, 2015, p.170).

Nadan & Stark (2016) conducted research with trainee social workers in Israel using a pedagogy of discomfort to frame their analysis of how students perceived the 'Other',

concluding that “investigating the emotions generated by the experience facilitates a compelling basis for the pedagogical exploration of social injustice” (Nadan & Stark, 2016, p.13). Similarly, in my own work, I have engaged in intense reflexivity on my experiences as a white, female, British academic working in contexts that were formerly colonised by the British, for example, Hong Kong (Author, 2014, 2015) and, more latterly, South Africa (Muller & Author, 2016). Such reflexivity is often uncomfortable and challenging but, I consider it important that, if students are to be encouraged and supported to recognise their own prejudices and be challenged to confront them in the classroom, then it is crucial that the educator engages in similar processes. Unless s/he is prepared to do so then a pedagogy of discomfort becomes disingenuous.

One of the reasons that I agreed to be named on the grant proposal, as articulated earlier, was that I believe that each one of us is able to effect change, however small. I have been aware and, more importantly, have had feedback to this effect, that the approaches to learning and teaching that I have developed through my research and continuous reflection on my practice have not only engaged students but also have enabled those who may have felt marginalised to have a voice (see, for example, Author, 2014). Importantly, my efforts to facilitate learning environments that are ethnorelative rather than ethnocentric have challenged many students and, indeed, colleagues, to reflect much more critically on their own values and beliefs, in particular about the ‘Other’ in the room. Such practices developed out of my PhD research that I began in 2000 in which I investigated the experiences of a multicultural group of postgraduate students in UK higher education and throughout which I subjected my own values and beliefs and my own ‘whiteness’ to critical interrogation. I am unable to compartmentalise my life into teaching and research

silos, therefore, inevitably each informs the other and continues to do so, hence the critical reflections described here in response to my involvement in the IRIS project. Such reflexivity has always been important in my view, in particular given the increasing diversity of the 21st century university but perhaps is even more crucial now when "stereotypes and misunderstanding seem to be particularly rampant and quickly shared…being able to see through others' eyes – have global ramifications that extend far beyond higher education" (Kahn & Agnew, 2016, p.3). Thus, participating in the IRIS project, as WP leader, meant that I had the potential, through presenting different rationales for internationalising curricula, including the pedagogical exploration of social justice, to encourage partners to develop learning, teaching and assessment practices that were more inclusive. I did not anticipate, however, that I would be engaging in these processes with the partners themselves.

I was aware from relevant research that internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC) or curriculum internationalisation are terms that few people are able to define and even fewer consider have anything to do with them (Leask, 2013). I had inferred from the college websites and from early conversations with partners that they regarded their higher education classrooms as sites of opportunity to engage students in intercultural dialogue and to engender a sense of social justice. I had not anticipated that we would be living out a pedagogy of discomfort in the workshops which did, indeed, at times, in my experience, become a "turbulent ground on which to critique deeply held assumptions about ourselves and others" (Zembylas, 2015, p.166).

Internationalising the curriculum: the Work Package

"Decisions about curricula…are ideological in nature, shaped by beliefs about internationalisation/globalisation and the curriculum itself" (Leask, 2008 p.13). Having worked on internationalising curricula both in the UK and Hong Kong and

advised on the process in other contexts, I was aware that academics can feel uncertain about the concept and may consider that it has nothing to do with them (Leask, 2013). In the first workshop in November 2013, I introduced the Israeli partners, in various ways, to the concept of IoC, encouraging them to identify the extent to which their curricula were 'internationalised' within the definitions that we discussed. Prefacing that first session with the words of Leask & Bridge (2013, p.81) that "there is a varied and highly limited view of the curriculum in different universities which constrains their understanding and application of pedagogical principles", I offered as a working definition:

> Curricula, pedagogies and assessments that foster: understanding of global perspectives and how these intersect and interact with the local and the personal: inter-cultural capabilities in terms of actively engaging with other cultures; and responsible citizenship in terms of addressing different value systems and subsequent actions' (Clifford, 2009, p.135).

The choice of these words was deliberate as they enabled me to relate them closely to the concept of global citizenship and to initiate discussion related to social justice in higher education. Global citizenship is a contested term, however, with both negative and positive connotations. It can be associated with the responsibility to act in the interests of social justice and, more negatively, with cultural imperialism (Mertova & Green, 2010); partners were encouraged to critique the concept of global citizenship from the outset of the first workshop and to continue to do so throughout the WP.

In addition, we discussed different theoretical perspectives that inform learning and teaching in higher education in order to clarify how these are culturally mediated and to identify dominant knowledges informing practices in the context. I deemed this to

be important in enabling the partners to recognise the differences between ethnocentric and ethnorelative approaches to learning and teaching.

On that first day of the workshop, I realised the complexities of my role. The first question that I was asked was 'Why should we internationalise our curricula'? And the second one was 'How can we consider internationalising our curricula to enable understanding of global perspectives when we struggle to understand our own, local perspectives'? I used these questions to open up debate, a debate in which, as in any group, some were more willing to engage than others. These early stages of the first workshop established a climate within which robust discussion about such contentious issues ensued and became intrinsic to the subsequent activities. An unanticipated outcome of the project, as I alluded to earlier, was that I came to understand the ways in which internationalising higher education and internationalising the curriculum strategies can negotiate the complex and difficult processes of furthering intercultural understanding in a politically conflicted context. I found this first day of the workshop difficult, in spite of, in hindsight, recognising the importance of the conflict. I am an experienced facilitator and have worked extensively with very diverse groups, mediating successfully many complex group dynamics. In this group, however, I experienced a level of cynicism and resistance from some participants that seemed to be out of proportion to the task in hand. As the first day progressed, it became clear that there were those who were sceptical but open to the processes in which we were engaging and others who were less so, were somewhat resistant and who struggled to attribute meaning to the concept of curriculum internationalisation. For the final activity of the two day workshop, I had written some case studies that were based on my experiences of learning and teaching in complex, multicultural environments. The purpose of the case studies was for

participants to discuss the problematic situations and to propose possible ways forward in order to resolve the situations. I explained that, although the case studies emanated from my experiences, perhaps they would resonate with them. I was totally unprepared for the reaction, initiated by one of the participants. A case study that I had written about an incident in Hong Kong in which some expatriate students were marginalising local Hong Kong students had resonated powerfully with her. She shared an experience of how Palestinian Arabs were similarly ignored in her context. My case study had provoked her into initiating a debate about hostilities in the local environment. Others joined in and a vigorous exchange of views ensued. At the end of the workshop, one of the Palestinian Arab participants shared with me how valuable he had found this discussion. I responded by acknowledging the interesting, if uncomfortable conversations that they had stimulated, to which he replied, 'we never talk like this together'.

Following my experience of this first workshop, I was not looking forward to the second one. I was questioning my role in the project, reflecting on the difficulties I had encountered, musing on whether I was the 'right' person for this task, when I received the evaluations, which were very positive:

"It was perfect"

"Enjoyed very much the opportunity to discuss issues and learn with the Israeli partners and the facilitator"

"Heartfelt thanks for the wonderful organisation of the workshop"

Thank you! It was a very informative workshop. I like your teaching approach"

Such comments motivated me to throw myself into the planning for our next meeting. I requested that all partners present on the progress that they had made towards IoC, giving them very specific guidelines for preparation. I researched extensively into

how the curriculum had been ‘internationalised’ in partners’ disciplines – for example, engineering, art and design, teacher education.

In this workshop I:

- Shared how I ‘internationalised’ the curriculum in a specific course and provided examples from other disciplines
- ‘Cascading’ internationalisation of the curriculum – how can partners share their learning about this process in their organisations? I provided a template to help them to do so

Participants were invited to respond to the following questions:

- With what you know now, what is the extent of ‘internationalisation of the curriculum’ in your college – as far as you know?
- What courses/programmes do you offer in which students from different faiths/cultures/ethnic groups participate – and what complexities do you encounter?
- Are you planning any new programmes? If so, how can you ensure that an internationalised curriculum is embedded from the outset?

Workshop Two (January 2014) thus began with partners presenting their IoC progress and then focused on IoC in the aforementioned disciplines. I was astounded by partners’ ‘presentations’. Those who had expressed the most cynicism and resistance to the concepts that I shared in the first workshop were now presenting carefully considered plans that focused not only on curriculum content but on interrogating their learning, teaching and assessment approaches and on developing strategies to facilitate communication between students from different ethnicities and faiths in the learning environment. In addition, each partner/group of partners had started to engage other colleagues in their institution in IoC principles and practices. I was open

in expressing my astonishment at the lessening of resistance in some and celebrated the obvious and ongoing commitment of those who had been more open to the IoC process at the first workshop. What had made the difference? Not unsurprisingly their responses varied. For some it was reading the publication that I had distributed at the first workshop in which I wrote reflexively about the complexities I encountered in my own learning and teaching, thus reading my reflections consolidated my sharing of them; for others the workshop had provided an impetus to continue conversations with each other and to begin them with other colleagues. In addition, they were all part of the wider IRIS project and were beginning to see how internationalising higher education was not only about student mobility and developing programmes that might attract students from other contexts, but also carried the potential to develop a stronger sense of global responsibility and citizenship. It seemed as if engaging in a pedagogy of discomfort with me and with each other was enabling them to do so with others.

The objectives of the third workshop (May 2014) were to:

- To enable participants to share experiences of internationalising the curriculum in their programmes
- To identify and discuss the meaning of 'quality' in learning, teaching and assessment in higher education and the factors that need to be taken into account in 'measuring' an internationalised curriculum
- To enable participants to share experiences of 'cascading' internationalisation of the curriculum in their organisations

I asked that each partner college prepare a short activity that they could facilitate with the others in the group that demonstrated how they were communicating the principles and practices of this WP in their colleges. I was impressed with the

thoughtfulness with which these activities were presented and with how each partner provided space for less comfortable conversations about pedagogy and also about the specific local complexities. It seemed to me that, in this third workshop, they were indeed engaging fully with the principles of a pedagogy of discomfort and working towards developing pedagogical reciprocity (Jansen, 2009). The comment below is an example from one partner:

> *"I put together a 3 session workshop which builds, directly and indirectly, on the publication you wrote and your previous IRIS workshops. I found your materials absolutely priceless!"*

Moving on? Decolonisation of the curriculum – and of knowledge (s)

Since I worked on the project, the use of the term 'internationalisation of the curriculum' has become more nuanced in the literature and is perhaps being replaced by terms such as global learning and cosmopolitan learning (Leask & de Wit, 2016, pp.1-2).

In an attempt to broaden out the definitions of internationalisation of the curriculum, Leask & de Wit (2016, p.2) call for the development of the "concept of 'responsible' global citizenship using a lens of cosmopolitan learning as the foundation for an internationalised curriculum for all students" continuing to advocate for students and academics to be engaged as "cosmopolitan learners" (p.3). A concern I continue to have with the term 'global', as mentioned earlier, is that it is mediated by particular understandings that are, very often, 'Western'. As Kahn & Agnew (2016) argue:

> There is no single definition of global learning: designations of *global* are filtered through social and historical contexts, interconnections between epistemology and power, and the masking of privilege (p.2, original emphasis)

Similarly, I need to be jolted, constantly, by those such as Mbembe (2015) who calls for “the development of a set of pedagogies we should call *pedagogies of presence”* (npn, original emphasis) and that the university should become “*a classroom without walls* in which we are all *co-learners*; a university that is capable of convening *various publics in new forms of assemblies that become points of convergence of and platforms for the redistribution of different kinds of knowledge”* (npn, original emphasis). In addition, he defines the “decolonizing project” as a “

> critique of the dominant Eurocentric model – the fight against …’epistemic coloniality’ that is, the endless production of theories that are based on European traditions; are produced nearly always by Europeans or Euro-American men who are the only ones accepted as capable of reaching universality; a particular anthropological knowledge which is a process of knowing about Others – but a process that never fully acknowledges those Others as thinking and knowledge-producing subjects (npn).

Mbembe’s words resonate with those of De Sousa Santos (2014) “If the epistemological diversity of the world is to be accounted for, other theories must be developed and anchored in other epistemologies-the epistemologies that adequately account for the realities of the global south” (Santos, 2014; 43). I do not claim here that, as WP leader, I discussed, overtly, decolonisation of the curriculum but I did encourage the Israeli partners to reflect on the relevance of their approaches to learning and teaching and the extent to which they were inclusive of all students. Similarly, when I shared the concept of global citizenship with the partners, I was careful to qualify it by inviting them to view it as, possibly, another Eurocentric construction masquerading as universal, as articulated earlier.

'Internationalising the Curriculum' the Development of Programmes Pedagogy of presence

Barcena Orbe (2012) defines pedagogy of presence as " to be present to what happens in an educational setting, as teachers or learners, as professors or students, or as researchers, is to bring into play our attention and produce our own *visibility* in what we do and what we think" (p.26, original emphasis). In this article, I have been striving to illustrate how such concepts as pedagogy of discomfort, unhomeliness, pedagogical reciprocity and, indeed, pedagogy of presence, were intrinsic to the workshops and to my interactions with the partners. I was immensely impressed with the progress that the Israeli and Palestinian Arab partners made in establishing what internationalisation means for them, in their context, and in internationalising their curricula. Several of them moved from resistance – as displayed in their early questions in the first workshop - to developing programmes that are embedding internationalisation of the curricula elements. Motivated by our sessions on the cultural mediation of learning, teaching and assessment and encouraging intercultural communication in multicultural learning environments, some partners are establishing programmes similar to the *Difference and Diversity in Israeli Society* programme at David Yelta College of Academic Education in Jerusalem (Bar-Shalom, Diab & Rousseau, 2008), programmes that aim to facilitate all students and academics to challenge their perceptions of each other and to integrate global perspectives into the learning, teaching and assessment processes. For example, ORT Braude College (OBC) has held training workshops for academic staff on innovative teaching methods, assessment methods, and defining learning objectives and organised a workshop for heads of departments on "Internationalisation of Engineering Curricula" study programmes. In addition, OBC organised a national conference on "Initiatives

for Promoting Learning in Higher Education: a global perspective" in May 2015. The institutional community of practice of those involved in international teaching and learning has increased in the number of participants and in volume of activity, including peer learning of innovative teaching approaches.

Max Stern Academic College of Emek Yezreel (YVC) extended one of their pilot activities for the IRIS project, which used action research to focus on diversity sensitive teaching and learning. This has developed into a study that examined the consequences of diversity on institutions of higher education in a complex socio-political context, illuminating how such features influence teaching and learning practices. The findings revealed three main themes on "socially sensitive teaching": (a) a uniform versus differential teaching attitude toward students from different social backgrounds; (b) engaging or avoiding engagement with the social context in general and the adversarial social context between groups in particular; (c) awareness of and sensitivity to the values and needs of students from various backgrounds.

Al-Qasemi Academic College of Education (QSM), the Palestinian Arab College, has identified the development of internationalised curricula as one of the major goals in its strategic plan for internationalisation. Programmes are now being developed to provide students with global perspectives of their discipline and to give them a broader knowledge base for their future careers. Such programmes are integrating the articulation of values and skills needed to operate in diverse cultural environments, enabling students to develop intercultural competencies and cross-cultural capabilities and work towards global citizenship. These examples provide a broad illustration of how the partners engaged with IoC principles and practices to useful effect. The following, more detailed, case study illustrates more specifically how one partner integrated concepts and practices of internationalised curricula and, indeed, of a

pedagogy of discomfort into her teaching and programme design to begin to nurture pedagogical reciprocity and presence in her classroom.

Following the first workshop in November 2013, I worked closely with a partner from Kaye College in Be'er Sheva, on internationalising the curriculum of a new Master's programme 'Education in the Age of Information and Communication Technologies' and in supporting her to encourage Jewish and Bedouin and other minorities to work together actively in the 'classroom' to develop intercultural understanding. In order to begin this process, the partner gave the students two articles on globalisation together with an article that I had written, an article that was an autoethnographic exploration of my own experiences of the complexities of learning and teaching in multicultural contexts (Author, 2013). The students discussed these articles and subsequently questions and comments were directed to me in a Skype meeting. Prior to the meeting, the partner had kept me informed about the developments in the interaction between the students and had sent me some images of them working in multicultural/multifaith groups so that I could witness this change in their working practices, as, up until this point, they had always grouped themselves according to faith/ethnicity and gender. Reading and discussing my article, together with the partner's input about IoC that I had introduced in the IRIS workshops, persuaded the students to take the risk with each other and to move out of their 'comfort zones' to work in heterogeneous, rather than homogeneous groups. I was curious to understand what had enabled them to risk forming groups with those that they positioned as the 'Other', exploring this with them in our Skype meeting. It seemed that the autoethnographic writing had resonated with them, causing them to reflect on their own experiences and perceptions. In other words, my sharing of my own vulnerabilities had

encouraged them to share theirs. This enabled them to begin to see that there were many similarities – in addition to differences – in the ways in which they lived their lives. One of the students said:

'Through this process, we are learning to see the person, not the culture or the faith'.

Conclusion

So, after having shared my critical reflections on my recent experiences in Israel, what can I extrapolate in relation to internationalisation of higher education and, in particular, the value of IoC in conflicted contexts? I am fully aware that there are several initiatives that have been and are being established in Israel that are striving to address the issues that I have been writing about in this article. They have been initiated by those with much more experience of the context than me, indeed those that have lived in Israel all of their lives and live with the tensions and complexities every day, for example, the *Difference and Diversity in Israeli Society* programme to which I referred earlier. I believe, however, that my experience of teaching in multicultural environments, mainly in the UK and in Hong Kong, and my willingness to share with the Israeli partners the processes, often uncomfortable, that I had experienced and was experiencing with them, motivated many partners to engage in similar processes and to problematise their learning and teaching approaches. My considered use of case studies of students who were marginalising others in the classroom, inviting discussion on what to do in such situations enabled partners to reflect on their own circumstances, what they did or did not do and what they could do differently.

On a personal level, I did not resolve the tensions that I experienced at the beginning of the IRIS project; my sympathies remain with the Palestinians in their struggle. I have, however, learned more about the complexities of the 'political situation' - as it

is referred to. I have become aware that there are many people in Israel – of all faiths and ethnicities – working together to effect a peaceful solution to the 'situation' in this troubled region. Dialogue is crucial in helping me to understand, not only why others hold the values and beliefs that they do, but also what informs my own values and beliefs. I feel privileged to have been a part of a dialogue, albeit in a small way, in enabling some greater awareness of how internationalisation of higher education in Israel can play a significant part in moving towards greater social justice and understanding in this conflicted part of the world. My experiences in Israel, although often uncomfortable and personally challenging, mirror my lived experience of a pedagogy of discomfort thus the words of De Sousa Santos, Nunes & Meneses (2007) seem a fitting note on which to end:

"There is no global social justice without global cognitive justice" (p.xix)

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