

# **Transformative Learning through Internationalisation of the Curriculum in Higher Education**

## **Abstract**

Over the last three decades universities have, almost universally, adopted the mantra of internationalisation. However, the implications of internationalisation for transformative learning through curriculum receives little consideration. This paper draws on data from a fully online course entitled 'Internationalising the Curriculum for All Students' subscribed to by tertiary level staff from around the world. The course encourages participants to explore a transformative interpretation of internationalisation of the curriculum and to take action to change their own curricula. Analysis of the perceptions of course participants of internationalising the curriculum for transformative learning and of associated changes in their perceptions of their disciplines, and of teaching in their disciplines, show that participants see transformative learning as requiring fundamental changes in the personal and social perspectives of both students and staff, and also requires participation and change at all levels of tertiary education institutions.

## **Introduction**

Envisioning the purpose of higher education is especially important today when globalisation has drastically increased the interdependence of nations and highlighted the inequalities in the world.. While some nations now have 30-50% of their young people participating in tertiary education and their governments demanding this education be more vocationally oriented, access in other nations is still severely restricted. In developing countries access to even basic education and the quality of that education are continuing challenges (UNESCO, 2014). . Despite this complex and unequal social, cultural and political landscape, little heed is given to the need for a differently educated citizenry to address the challenges confronting the modern world. As the nature of employment and the university degree changes and the range of choices for both students and employers develop so there is a need for different sorts of university curriculum (Lauder, 2011). There is also a necessity for space to be made for such debates and the implications for tertiary education curricula to be investigated. Internationalisation has the potential to provide such a space, offering the opportunity for the reconceptualisation of epistemologies and pedagogies (Author, 2012). However, there has been little research interrogating how an holistic internationalised curriculum might be enacted across higher education institutions.

Ideas relating to transformative learning can provide a holistic framework to apply across institutions and programmes and its philosophies resonate with approaches to internationalisation of the curriculum. Shultz (2007, p.255) describes three approaches to global education:

the neo-liberal approach producing individuals in privileged positions to travel and work across national boundaries; the radical approach, which fights to resist globalisation and to strengthen local and national institutions; and the transformative approach, where citizens have an understanding of a common humanity, a shared planet and a shared future.

In this paper we consider how a wholly internationalised curriculum might be enacted by analysing the reactions of an international group of tertiary educators to a transformative rather than a liberal interpretation of internationalising the curriculum [IoC]. The participants' perceptions of the concept of transformative learning are examined in the context of their exploration of ideas about an internationalised curriculum and global citizenship, and consideration given to whether the course itself offers them the opportunity for transformative learning. Before discussing the data we examine the concept of transformative learning and how it might play out in practice. The initial sections of the article also offer a definition of a global citizen, the personification of a transformative internationalised curriculum. The data illustrate tertiary teaching staff articulating their own conceptualisation of an internationalised curriculum and demonstrates their struggle with the compatibility of their ideals in relation to their practice.

## **What is transformative learning and why is it significant?**

One of the leading proponents of transformative learning, Mezirow (2003, p.58) describes the concept as:

learning that transforms problematic frames of reference – sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets) - to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change.

Mezirow sees transformative learning as leading to an understanding of self, an awareness of self in relation to others and in turn this leading to changes in how one sees the world, a perspective change. Similarly, other writers view perspective transformation as involving: the understanding of self; our belief systems; and our behaviours (Clark, 1992). A personal and social transformation is seen as necessary by some writers before any “meaningful sustained social change” can be enacted (Dirkx, 1998, p.9). While Mezirow (1991a) focuses on the development of the autonomous thinker other writers stress the process, the social experience, and the dialogic discussions that arise from critical thinking as essential to challenging our perspectives (Brookfield, 2005). Freire (1993) sees transformative learners being empowered to become agents of change in their own lives and in the transformation of society.

Transformative learning theorists are in no doubt about the political underpinnings of their work, it being based on the ideals of democracy, justice and equality (Giroux, 1992; Friere, 1993; Dirkx, 1998; Brookfield, 2005). They challenge us to move beyond focusing on how to make current systems work more efficiently, to ask the bigger questions such as, How should we live?

What sort of societal organisation will help people treat each other fairly and compassionately? Mezirow wrote of ‘metavalues of truth, beauty, goodness and justice’ (1991b). However, the idea of metavalues and rational thought have been critiqued as arising from Western frames of reference and questions asked about the feasibility of being able to transcend our own socio-linguistic backgrounds that limit our conceptualisations (Taylor, 1998). We are all immersed in a particular view of self that shapes and informs our way of thinking and within this we are seldom able to see how our own sets of assumptions and beliefs impact upon our practice.

What is involved in internationalising a curriculum is contested as shown above (Shultz, 2007). However, the transformative approach seeks the opportunity to redesign curricula holistically, taking on the principles of transformative learning from developing knowledge of self, and of self in relation to others, and seeing personal change as a necessary precursor to social change. The interdependence of a globalised world places the active consideration of political stances such as justice and equity firmly within the curriculum.

### ***The practice of transformative learning Readiness***

Transformative learning is a process that requires the active participation of students and teachers, both needing to be open to dialogue and change. Critical reflection is seen as the pathway to transformative learning. However, critical reflection is itself a journey where the personal and socio-cultural readiness of students is important (Kreber, 2004). Jarvis (2006) describes a learning model that is useful for considering how we reach the stage of critical reflection: non-learning (when one is in harmony with what is being taught); non-reflective learning (when one adjusts what one thinks to fit new information and ideas); and reflective learning (where one considers what has been presented and decides to take action on incongruent ideas and feelings). Similarly, Mezirow (1991a, p.217) described different levels of readiness for transformative learning: “conventional learners, who accept traditional cultural perspectives; ‘threshold learners’ who have met a disorientating dilemma; ‘emancipated learners’ who have never fully accepted traditional roles and are already involved in self-examination; and ‘transformative learners’ who realize how culture and their own attitudes conspire to define and limit their self-concept and how they live their lives”. Jarvis’s reflective learners and Mezirow’s threshold, emancipated and transformative learners are questioning their existing frames of reference, or perspectives, feeling various levels of discomfort and so are becoming open to consider new ideas. When considering internationalising the curriculum for global citizenship the levels of readiness of staff as well as students has to be considered as well as the ability of staff to provide the safety and support necessary to students moving through disturbing learning experiences.

### ***Role of teachers and learners***

Central to the process of critical reflection and transformative learning is the role of the teacher. Transformative learning approaches ask teachers to take risks, challenge cultural-discipline norms and to critically reflect on their work and themselves (Neuman, 1996 as cited in Taylor, 1998). The problematisation and critical awareness of teacher positionality is a crucial element in transformative learning (Montgomery, 2014). It is essential that teachers are transformative intellectuals and understand pedagogy as a form of cultural production (Giroux, 1992). This is a very personal and potentially stressful journey that impacts on teachers' identities. Our identities are seen as many faceted so that engaging with disorientating concepts can lead to ambivalent responses within ourselves as well as other learners (Boyd, 1989; Clark & Dirkx, 2000). Erichsen (2011, p.126) writes on the complexity of the self as "a process ever negotiated and accomplished in interaction with the significant actors in a person's life and within varying social contexts", where we are involved in rewriting our own narrative, reconstructing our life experiences, described by Gill as "the reweaving of the fragmented self" (Gill, 2007 as cited in Erichsen, 2011, p.111). Transformative learning is not just about epistemology but also about our ontological selves (Kreber, 2004). Teachers need to have moved through these difficult spaces, to inform their own understanding, before they can facilitate the journey of their students (Author, 2005; Neumann, 1996).

The student-teacher relationship is seen as vital to transformative learning. A relationship of support, trust and friendship is seen as necessary in order to give a safe space for learners to be willing to take risks and develop (Neuman, 1996; Kreber, 2004), along with a willingness of the teachers to accept students as partners in the creation of knowledge. Saavedra (1996) describes the conditions that can facilitate transformative learning in a group context. In these, dialogue and exploration of self are privileged with teachers using dissonance as a learning opportunity, participants having time for reflection and developing new knowledge, teachers also reflecting on how to evaluate and change their practice. Meyer and Land's (2005) work on threshold concepts describes the discomfort of troublesome knowledge, of learners entering a liminal state and needing to move through a threshold to enter a postliminal state of a new understanding. There are risks involved in exploring emotions and disrupting students' world views in the learning setting. Teachers require the trust of their students and excellent facilitation skills. These pedagogies are experimental; they involve the emotions and are disequilibrating. Mezirow (1981) points out that there is a vast difference between teaching a person how to perform a task and helping them to achieve perspective transformation. The preparation of teachers for these new relationships and border pedagogies is vital (Giroux, 1992).

Kitano's (1997) framework provides a clear exposition of many of these approaches to pedagogy and outlines a crucial difference between 'inclusive' curriculum (where internationalisation remains an added dimension) and 'transformative' curriculum that requires a fundamental shift in positions and relationships.

## **Internationalisation of the Curriculum**

The relevance of the facets of transformative learning to Internationalisation of the curriculum can be seen in the concept of a global citizen, and these may be viewed as the potential goal of a transformed internationalised curriculum. In 2006 Oxfam defined a global citizen as someone who:

- Is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen;
- Respects and values diversity;
- Has an understanding of how the world works economically, politically, socially, culturally, technologically and environmentally;
- Is outraged by social injustice;
- Participates in and contributes to the community at a range of levels from local to global;
- Is willing to act to make the world a more sustainable place; and
- Take responsibility for their actions.

Such a vision applied to higher education is contested, as is transformative learning, with these perspectives fundamentally questioning the purpose of education, rejecting the perpetuation of the status quo and seeing education as a radical force for personal and societal change (Giroux, 1992; Freire, 1993). In this paper, we analyse the responses of tertiary sector teachers and educational leaders faced with these ideals using the context of internationalisation of the curriculum and discuss the implications for personal development and possible curricula change.

## **Methodology**

This paper draws on a longitudinal research project which investigates the ways in which university educators develop an understanding of transformative learning in the context of an internationalised curriculum. This paper charts the disruption to the participants' ontological and epistemological beliefs in their personal responses and their perceptions of the responses of their institutions, their disciplines, colleagues and students. The data was gathered over a five year period from six iterations of a four week fully online course entitled 'Internationalising the curriculum for all students'. A total of 109 teacher/educators working in 10 different countries have participated in the course. The participants were fulfilling a range of academic and leadership roles in higher education institutions across the globe. In order to provide a snapshot of the overall data and findings, this paper analyses one particular iteration of the course where transformative learning was especially vigorously debated. The nineteen participants of this iteration accessed the course from the UK, Australia, NZ, the Netherlands and Colombia, with three holding faculty or school leadership positions for internationalisation, and one holding such a position in the National Union of Students. Five of the group were academic developers (working across the faculties), one a student advisor and one a postgraduate research student. The rest of the group were faculty academics covering the disciplines of politics, architecture, science, medicine, law,

business, physiotherapy, French, English language and communication and media.

The course allows a few days for participants to get online, familiarise themselves with the Moodle platform and provide a profile to introduce themselves to their fellow participants. Each week a new topic is introduced with readings followed by tasks such as: searching for their institutions' pertinent strategic plans and policies; investigating discipline-based web resources; or contributing practical ideas on 'how to do internationalisation of the curriculum'. These activities are drawn together by participants posting ideas and responses on discussion forums on each topic. Although discussion is asynchronous as people participate from around the world the different time zones lead to a continuous discussion flow. The weekly topics progressively introduce participants to definitions of Internationalisation of the curriculum, an exploration of institutional contexts, the concept of Internationalisation of the curriculum as a transformative rather than a liberal curriculum, and disciplinary contexts. Finally participants are asked to draw up a plan of how they will take Internationalisation of the curriculum forward in their institution. This will vary according to the position of the participant within their institution, their institutional and disciplinary contexts and their personal orientation to transformative learning.

The project aims to analyse the educators' interpretations of internationalisation and transformative learning using data from the online discussions which were an integral element of the course. Online discussions constitute written discourse that is more formal and reflective than face-to-face conversation, allowing participants to offer knowledge constructed from experience, social interaction and reflection (Eraut, 2007). Participants in the course were invited to explore a transformative, rather than liberal, discourse of internationalisation, aimed at designing curriculum to develop graduates as global citizens rather than cosmopolitans. The distinction between a cosmopolitan who is knowledgeable about a global, interdependent world and able to move comfortably between different cultural environments, and a global citizen, who is also actively involved as an agent for change in global issues such as injustice and sustainability, is an important one and the course underlines the significance of embedding this into curricula. In order to encourage educators' to interrogate their own practice, one of the course activities required participants to contribute to a list of practical teaching ideas and to explore ideas on the list using Kitano's (1997:18) framework of '*exclusive, inclusive and transformed*' levels of curriculum change. This activity generated much discussion about the difference between inclusive and transformative activities and the possibilities and risks involved with the latter. In the last week of the course participants drew up action plans for their future work in the area of internationalisation. These plans are also drawn on in the analysis.

Data relating to participants' interpretations of internationalisation and transformative learning were thematically analysed using inductive approaches to develop data-driven categories. From this process a set of 19 categories were generated (such as: activism and learning; global citizenship; identity; influence of the disciplines) and used by both researchers to code all the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Inter-rater reliability was high. Participants were notified of the research study when they joined the course and their written

consent to use their online contributions was obtained by email on conclusion of the course.

For this paper, the participants' perceptions of transformative learning are explored as well as the possibilities for moving towards a transformative approach in internationalising the curriculum and pedagogy of their disciplines. In the text below quotes from the course participants are identified with a number for the discussion forum and a letter for each speaker.

## **The practice of Transformative Learning**

### ***Empowering students to become agents of change in their own lives and in society***

For the course participants, transformative learning was about empowering students. Empowerment was seen to happen through student-centred collaborative work with teachers and students engaged in the co-construction of knowledge, peer-learning and teachers-as-learners being essential to the process. They described the process as “stripping down” (11B) what students already know and seeing the familiar from different perspectives. Participants suggested that this sort of dialogic empowerment could offer students an “awareness of self, of their own strengths and prejudices” (2Q) and new ways of thinking. This would empower them “to engage with and challenge the curriculum” and for some this meant “students decide what should be learnt, how it is to be learnt and how assessed” (2G). Intercultural learning was seen as an important part of that curriculum for learners functioning in a multi-cultural world.

Two key ideas from this reading about the transformative approach struck a chord with me. The idea of interpreting the curriculum through the context of difference and the idea of exploring how power is implicated in the creation of knowledge are to me the key concepts in a transformative approach. (11L)

Although participants were in agreement on the meaning of transformative learning, there was less unison on the end result of empowering students. At the political level, some saw the ultimate goal as students becoming active global citizens concerned with, and taking action on, such ideals as justice, equality and social responsibility, with one participant observing:

Indeed where else would the 21st century graduates learn about this if not at the university to enforce their sense of ethical values. (2C)

However, others felt that was a step too far, sometimes for themselves, sometimes for their students and especially in terms of institutions of tertiary education and current political agendas. They felt more comfortable with the end point being cosmopolitan students (Mezirow's (1991a) emancipated learners), aware of global issues and able to empathise with others' perspectives but, with no agenda of having to take action based on a set of universal values (transformative learners).

## **Transformative learning and processes of change**

Transformative learning was not seen by the participants as endemic in tertiary education and when considering introducing an internationalised curriculum as a transformative learning process they saw it as requiring change at all levels of the organisations: the institutional where ideological decisions about graduate attributes and the curriculum are made with teachers instructed to develop their curriculum accordingly, but having no control; the course level where teachers interpret policy and activists fight for change; and the pedagogic level where teachers control changes in their own classroom pedagogy. They also saw another level of personal change that has to be engaged in to lead to perspective change and action.

### ***Change at the Institutional Level***

At the institutional level change required institutional engagement and participants saw this as essential for any radical change to happen. They found that internationalisation of the curriculum, and even global citizenship, is now referred to in a number of their institutions' strategic plans, but the meaning of these concepts were seldom spelt out and holistic curriculum redevelopment rarely envisaged. Professional accreditation was also seen as an obstacle, as being predominantly about specific knowledge and related skills, with little room for inclusion of a wider agenda. The participants saw the need for "focused leadership" in the area "and powerful incentives" (11T) for teachers to put the time and effort into redeveloping curricula, along with the professional development that would be required. They saw that cultural as well as structural change was necessary for curriculum internationalisation to happen. One participant notes:

I think I'm still struggling with suppressing the cynicism I feel when I read my university's internationalisation strategy, and yet know that we need this commitment in words, and hopefully in actions, at the institutional level, in order to underpin and support change on the individual level. You can't bring about cultural change if it's only coming from one direction, and I think it's about cultural change - or else, it becomes just a bit of tweaking here and there. (11M)

Although recognising the need for institutional strategies to support Internationalisation of the curriculum there was a feeling among some participants that institutional policies and systems had nothing to do with them and that they were in a position to only be reactive.

At the macro level I find I have absolutely no influence. Debates about graduate attributes, learning outcomes, ideology, policies - are all curriculum forces or legislations that arrive, in my teacher world, pre-determined. (11Z)

As cited earlier participants anticipated that the implication of Internationalisation of the curriculum for active citizenship would not sit well with the current vested interests of their institutions. However, one participant added:

From the perspective of influencing change, the challenge will be to overcome resistance that is deeply rooted in some of our institutions that were set up for an age long gone. However, if the purpose of university education is to interrogate and challenge old paradigms of knowledge to build new knowledge and ways of knowing then Internationalisation of the curriculum need not sit in contrast but rather be considered a natural development of a dynamic institution. (9M)

### ***Change at Programme Level***

The participants saw transformative learning as requiring a reconceptualisation of the whole curriculum, aligning aims, teaching and learning strategies and assessment processes. “It would be within this context that the micro-tasks that were offered would make sense” (7Z). The aim would be that students “live the course rather than endure it” (2R). In their action plans, some of the participants planned to work at the programme level within their institutions or with their curriculum teams. They saw their work as not only interpreting institutional curriculum imperatives but as the continual questioning of institutional curriculum objectives, the building of resources and offering of examples and support as ways forward.

As well as transformative learning being seen as difficult ideologically and practically for institutions, the participants saw higher education being wedded to the discipline knowledge that currently is the curriculum. Participants struggled with the concept of change in their disciplines, one writing:

I can't imagine as to how a curriculum team would give up the mantra that 'discipline' is the most important facet in a curriculum.(7Z)

Another wrote:

The problem with accounting and finance is the need to learn a good deal of basic technical building blocks before discussion can be widened into a more critical investigation...however, some opportunities exist. (1D)

There was also concern about the positioning of discipline knowledge in the context of the idea of the construction of new knowledge. Some participants began to see that Internationalisation of the curriculum was already part of their courses and could be built upon.

As a departmental group we have always insisted that we expect more from our students... and that a university education should be more about students enquiring and developing their own models of

the world. We also teach that accounting is socially constructed, but we don't ask what the impact of culture is on the outcome of that construction. The transformative approach seems to involve another step. (11D)

### *Change at the Pedagogic Level*

People on the course held different positions within their organisations and while some felt comfortable to interact with senior management and influence policy and others held programme leadership positions and could influence curriculum, a few participants acknowledged that they felt more comfortable focusing on their own pedagogy rather than changing curriculum content. Participants were asked to consider Kitano's (1997) framework of exclusive, inclusive and transformed curricula and there was discussion as to how aspects of the participants' disciplines might mesh with the different aspects of this framework. One notes:

[We] are enjoying looking at all this from the point of view of the "hard" subjects like accountancy and physics and motor mechanics! . . . However, out of such a context it is harder to see how there can be genuine application of a "transformed" approach. Perhaps the "inclusive" level, with some elements of "transformed", is enough of a challenge to be going on with! . . . the kind of change required to achieve "inclusive" curricula is groundbreaking enough; achieving "transformed" curricula seems to me a largely unattainable and not even a necessarily desirable goal for every content area. (11T)

Some participants felt that they could only go so far along the road of the transformed approach the Kitano framework was offering. One notes:

The integrative [inclusive] approach is something I feel more comfortable with. I have some idea of the problems that staff face trying to change their teaching process to connect with diverse learners. (11M)

In terms of the practical examples, collectively, the course participants saw the pedagogy of transformative learning as being based firmly on critical thinking and critical reflection to create intrinsic motivation in the students and welcomed examples of pedagogy that aided student reflection. A transformative pedagogy needed to involve meaningful student interaction and activity, involve student choice and include non-traditional assessment methods, such as peer and self-assessment and to build students' reflective capacity and sense of achievement.

This example appears to engage students in constructing knowledge, helps to build critical thinking skills and encourages peer learning – also includes student choice (they can choose how to present their work – they can tell a story, use pictures, use video, present case studies) and adopts an alternative to traditional assessment methods.

It also works towards student equity in the classroom – everyone has a turn and gets to be the ‘expert’ – can be very motivating and even empowering. (2Q)

Assessment expands from regurgitating information in examinations and papers in the exclusive course to self-assessment and reflections in the transformed course . . . Students’ self-assessment brings teachers and students together. It enables the students to identify their needs and lacks and as a result facilitate the teacher’s task to provide tailored help. Reflection stimulates the students to evaluate the course in relation to their personal and individual circumstances, interests and needs. It heightens their attention and responsibility towards their own learning and actions within the course so they can reap better benefit from it. In other words, it makes them live the course rather than endure it. (2R)

### ***Teacher-student relationship***

The participants saw themselves as central to the process of transformative change, with the teacher-student relationship being crucial. This surfaced a concern about the reactions of students to transformative learning and their preparedness for change. Some saw their students as being “extrinsically motivated to participate in tertiary education” and wanting “to gain a correct answer to their problem”. They expected to “be taught and not to contribute and listen to peers” and did not value peer learning (7G). There were concerns about students being “expected to perform as some Polly-Anna representative of their country or of activities being seen as patronising or tokenistic with assumptions of homogenous national cultures (Hofstede)” (2S). There was the realisation that we can give students the opportunity of transformative learning but we “can’t control what they do with their learning and it may not lead to the understanding of others” (7Q).

Participants in the course saw transformative learning as requiring a rethinking of teacher-student relationships in the construction of knowledge.

Here in Colombia, the common approach to teaching is often the ‘teacher as the font of all knowledge’ approach; so much so that I sometimes find myself teaching in that way partly because the students expect it, behave better and are unused to a more participatory approach. It makes me think that tackling this issue might be a good first step towards Internationalisation of the curriculum. (7P)

Some staff anticipated that students would perceive an emphasis on peer learning to be a disadvantage:

My College is a private provider and expensive too! So to start with, the students think that they haven’t come from the other end of the world and paid all that money for them to contribute texts, ideas and

reflections. They haven't come here either to listen to their peers. They have come to hear from the specialist! (2R)

As much as the participants were willing to explore the building of a learning environment to increase the likelihood of transformative learning occurring, there was also an awareness that students needed to be open to the opportunities that were offered for it to have any impact.

The level of transformation will be determined firstly by how open [students] are to 'other' ways of doing things, cultural ideas, concept and processes, and secondly by how the [students] relate to the power relations implicit between the dominant culture that their lives and the teaching lie within and are encompassed by, and the subjugation (or hopefully acceptance) of the 'other' culture within the students' worldviews. And then of course there is the power relationship of teacher/student to consider. (2S)

### ***Personal and social change***

Participants recognised that changes at institutional, programme or pedagogic levels were not going to happen without organisational personnel being open to change. The course participants themselves were very aware of their own need for development, to become “reflective and critical teachers” and to look at “how we view the world as individuals, how we respond to it and act within it” (2R).

One notes:

Until now I have not consciously reflected on my own degree of internationalisation to any great extent in how the concept relates to me personally and professionally and therefore developing an understanding of how this may affect my practice. (7F)

Another participant reflected upon the requirement for internationalisation to be internalised:

The thing that is constantly striking me about the notion of Internationalisation of the curriculum is how internalised much of it is. The changes that really need to occur are initially internal i.e. shifts in how we view the world as individuals, how we respond to, and consequently act within it. For me personally, and for what I understand as my job brief. (11W)

The participants were also concerned about their own ethnocentrism and how they moved beyond this.

I like the references to co-creation of knowledge and I think this links to inadvertent ethnocentric teaching in my case. I am aware that I have limited international experience and so unwittingly I may be

ethnocentric in my teaching. By using co-creation of knowledge and using the students' rich experiences perhaps this is a way to try to mitigate this. As such I'll need to rethink the way that I plan sessions in order to (remember to) do this. (2Q)

As well as their own cultural biases and the embeddedness of their western perspectives the participants were concerned about their levels of skills and knowledge as facilitators.

Furthermore, even assuming an appropriate level of broadmindedness, how do we treat very sensitive subjects in the classroom? What do we do if we disagree with the values being exhibited by others? This requires the acquisition of particular skills.(11D)

The participants were aware that by offering students the opportunity of transformative learning they would be taking students into uncomfortable places that could impact on their identity and that they would need support on their journey. Some questioned their ethical position as educators in asking students to join them in border crossing, questioning the motivation behind putting them through challenging emotional experiences (Giroux, 1992).. "How is this so 'ethical', when it's me that gains a living (and more - promotion) from this?" (7H).

While the participants were aware of the challenges at all levels of the institution to introducing transformative learning into their teaching and curriculum, their presence and active participation on the course attested to their involvement with their own transformative learning and their desire to invite their students into that space. They were also aware that although students may go through this consciousness raising process, it may not impact on their behaviour. However, it was also recognised that the impact of transformation may not be apparent until after students had left their courses and institutions.

## **Discussion**

This article set out to explore whether the introduction of a transformative conceptualisation of internationalisation of the curriculum to a group of tertiary teachers could offer them a transformative learning experience which, in turn, may open up the possibility of change in their practice, leading to opportunities for transformative learning for their students. The concept of transformative learning was not new to participants on this iteration of the course and they articulated clearly ideas of empowering students through the co-construction of knowledge. However, the concept of internationalising the curriculum for all students was new to many of them, but the ideology was eagerly embraced.

Subsequently, the excitement of philosophising soon dissipated when the participants were asked to consider the possibility of enacting the theory in their practice, a step necessary to ensure that critical reflection leads to learning (Kreber, 2004). Issues that surfaced ranged from the dominant political context and current political exigencies, entrenched institutional norms, the culture of

disciplines, the positionality of teachers and students and our own lack of imagination to envisage new ways of being and of teaching, all issues uncovered by Taylor in his 1998 and 2007 reviews of research papers on transformative learning.

Taylor's 2007 review particularly emphasized the importance of context for transformative learning. The current prominence of internationalisation strategies for universities gave staff motivation, and led to an openness, to engage with the transformative perspectives offered by the course. The course challenged the participants, and gave them space, to step back from their busy everyday work and to consider, holistically, the education of tertiary students and the future needs of society, a question that Giroux (2012) sees as not being addressed in contemporary higher education. This reflection and discussion confronted them with their own praxis and the exigencies of the contexts in which they worked, inviting them to engage in a perspective change (Mezirow, 1991a). Snyder (2008) discusses how participation in a course does not necessarily lead to change. However, all the participants completed an action plan showing an engagement with the course and a willingness to participate in future change. For some their plans involved working towards transformed curricula through various strategies at their institutions, but for others developing their own capacities to inclusively enhance their curricula was their current goal.

At the institutional level the political climate of tertiary education, with its focus on raising revenue and its ubiquitous employability agenda, was seen to militate against the introduction of a more liberal educational curriculum (Clark and Dirks, 2000). Participants saw entrenched values and interest groups that were unwilling to make space for change. While a number expressed their feelings of disempowerment to bring about any change at this level others, through their positions or their beliefs, were willing to initiate challenges to senior management and to strive for change, even at the risk of being seen as subversive rather than innovative. Garvett (2004) emphasised the importance of institutional support for staff and students to enable them to act upon their new understandings and bring them into their practice.

At the programme level, more of the participants felt that they were in the position to take responsibility for making changes or were willing to push for change. The main challenges at this level were seen to be the cultures of the disciplines, entrenched interests such as professional associations, university systems that militated against flexibility, and a culture of performativity and measurement, which can discourage experimentation and innovation. In discussing the power of the disciplines, it was seen as important to set global citizenship within the context of their disciplines while engaging with learning in the disciplines in a more open, ethical and sustainable way. While some disciplines, 'the hard disciplines' (Becher and Trowler, 2001) were, initially, seen as more intransigent, others were seen to be more reflective, and open to change (Author, 2009). However, even in the short time frame of the course, participants in the hard disciplines became excited about the possibilities of change and developed a number of new ideas for their courses.

Some participants saw themselves initially operating at the pedagogic level, feeling that bringing about change in the way they teach and assess to be more inclusive would be as far as they could go. They felt that the responsibility for actioning any curriculum changes rested on their shoulders and that

transformative learning required the development of special relationships with their students, excellent facilitation skills, the ability to deal with sensitive issues and the initiating of new flexible activities and assessments for their students. While the participants embraced these challenges, many felt the need for further professional development to enable them to deal with these areas. The course had raised their awareness of their need to increase their understanding of their own culture and of other cultures, to enhance their intercultural skills and their ability to see things from the perspectives of others. They also wanted to develop their ability to provide transformative educational opportunities for their students and to know how to support their students through different stages of their learning. This focus on their own development demonstrates Taylor's 1998 review finding that the role of the teacher and student were crucial to fostering transformative learning while Cranton (1994) has emphasised the need for teachers to be transformative learners themselves, and Giroux (1988, p.125) has called on teachers to be 'transformative intellectuals'.

Alongside this participants were concerned about student openness and readiness for transformation and the importance of affective learning (Taylor, 2007). Some struggled with ethical dilemmas, such as their right to put students through challenging emotional experiences, especially if this happened in isolation and not as part of a holistic education experience (Kreber, 2004; Brookfield, 2005). Discomfort was also expressed at whose interests were being served by fostering transformative learning, especially as the concepts of transformative learning and global citizenship seem to have been generated by Western pedagogues and could be seen as another form of colonialism (Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia, 2006; Pashby, 2011; Andreotti, 2011a; b). (These issues are discussed more fully in Author et al. (in press). Taylor (1998, p.59) wondered about the ethics of 'tampering with the 'world view' of participants without their permission.'

## **Conclusion**

This study explores the challenges for tertiary teaching staff confronting the issues involved in transformative learning, in the context of internationalising the curriculum. The participants express a broad willingness to engage in a transformative process to explore holistic educational goals for their students to empower their students to be agents of change. At the same time they were acutely aware, at the macro level, of the conservative, political environment of their institutions and disciplines, and at the micro-level of the deep changes that new curriculum would bring to pedagogy and student-teacher relationships. They appraised their own willingness and ability to work with students in a transformative way and their own need for development to embrace such changes. The study also illustrates the lack of power felt by many staff to initiate fundamental change for transformative learning in our current tertiary institutions, while recognising that their efforts would be steps along the way, all of them resolving to take action at some level, while acknowledging the challenges.

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