

## **M9 Conwy2 Thursday 6 December 15.00-15.30**

### ***Global Online Inter-university Teaching (GO-IT): an inclusive approach to students as global researchers? (0325)***

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Teachers at universities today are facing complex professional change processes related to globalised higher education and calls to internationalise the curriculum, although exactly what this means is contested (Kraska et al., 2018). Simultaneously, teachers are being called upon to engage students actively and directly in research/enquiry processes (Leat & Reid, 2012; Bland & Atweh, 2007) and present their work to external and/or international audiences (Fung, 2017). Such aims can be accomplished in different ways and to differing degrees – ranging from including student voices in research, enabling them to collect/analyse data in other people’s research projects, making them co-participants or even creators of their own research projects carried out alongside teachers as researchers (Bland & Atweh, 2007; Howard et al., 2002). It is in relation to this latter ‘radical’ (Fielding, 2001) sense of engaging students as researchers that the present work positions itself. Here, students, teachers, and researchers work together in different ways and with international outlook and intercultural awareness to establish ‘participatory academic communities’ (De Witt et al. 2015; Aaen & Nørgård, 2015).

However, such international outreach, collaboration, and dissemination through students who travel abroad, in TNE, student exchange schemes such as Erasmus exchanges, or use of visiting international or external lectures is often a costly and time consuming affair. Furthermore, exchanges are often cumbersome (requiring formal partnership arrangements) and only available to a very limited number of students from elite institutions who have the financial means and occasions to study abroad (Moore & Simon, 2015). The rationale for international partnerships may be income generation and employability rather than developing a deeply critical global citizenship for all students (Kraska et al., 2018) and home students can have a negative view of international visitors (Killick, 2018).

Digital technologies offer the possibility for large numbers of students to interact in international academic communities in shared environments that are equalising (Beelan, & Jones, 2015). Furthermore, digital communication presents a revenue-neutral possibility for widening students’ possibilities to experience themselves as researchers in participatory academic communities carrying out ‘real research’ that has an actual impact outside the classroom (Aaen & Nørgård, 2015). MOOCs as open and large scale and potentially open to a diversity of learners might seem to be the way forward for intercultural engagement online. Although here is not much research on the potential for international research-based collaboration in MOOCs, Trang (2018) suggests that students can have positive intercultural experiences but there are issues for instructors to address with language and lack of understanding of the host culture. Furthermore, instructors have little control with large numbers so using a MOOC to bring international students together may

be unpredictable. Instructors cannot get to know the diverse learning needs of the students and this makes pedagogies of collaboration and student interaction challenging to support.

With Global Online Inter-university Teaching (GO-IT) we intentionally tried to design against these prevalent structures and reconceptualise teaching as something addressing these challenges directly and wholeheartedly. GO-IT is presented here as a joint collaboration between two or more universities from different countries where academic staff create a collective participatory and equalising academic community for students and teachers as researchers / collaborators without formal arrangements and associated costs. The rationale behind the educational design of GO-IT is empowering teachers and students to engage with those from other countries to develop research skills, pedagogic innovation and intercultural understanding.

The paper presents a GO-IT interdisciplinary partnership between UCL, London and Aarhus University in Denmark with other international links. The partnership has included online contact between international teacher-researchers and student-researchers and external visits. The first iteration of GO-IT was run during the spring of 2016 from Aarhus University as a pilot. In the Winter and Spring of 2017 sessions ran from both Aarhus University and UCL running webinars, wikis or online video sessions where students and teachers met as researchers across countries/universities to 'think globally about research' together. UCL staff also visited Aarhus University in 2017 to run an academic staff development course on GO-IT and to undertake joint participatory action research on GO-IT.

For the study, each partner undertook a critical self-reflection on the pilot teaching activities between students and staff in Denmark and the UK. Participant evaluations of teaching sessions were undertaken alongside student reflections on the process and outcomes of the collaborative experience. Staff development sessions were explored using focus groups with potential GO-IT participants.

Drawing on some preliminary evaluation data the paper will explore the benefits of GO-IT and its wider implications by answering the following questions:

- What are the benefits for an academic/teacher running sessions or seminars for students from a different country/institution?
- What will a diversity of students gain from linking research and education in participatory academic communities with staff and students from other countries?
- What are the ethics of care and risks when moving from exchange of one-off teaching sessions into more sustained blocks of shared international teaching?
- Can informal GO-IT partnerships work against the prevailing growth and reinforcement of elite institutions?

Through GO-IT research and education were intimately linked in ways that moved students beyond the confinements both classroom and campus through creating connections between curriculum and academic communities beyond the institution. Engaging a diversity of students in research is not straightforward (Hughes, 2018), but through dialogues, critical debates, presentations of research findings and academic dialogue, students and teachers met online as researchers inquiring into this field to form

research-informed practice. Cross-cultural exchange developed into intercultural and international research collaboration. There were indications of challenges to inclusion such as unfamiliarity of participants with online platforms and nervousness about presenting ideas to international 'strangers'. Finding a suitable partner is important and sustaining more than one GO-IT session per course/module may also be a challenge. Nevertheless, the partnership and the action research is continuing and offers a blueprint for other GO-IT partnerships that might further challenge the stratification of Higher Education.