

The 'torn curriculum' in globalised doctoral education (0155)

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On a global scale, research and researchers are increasingly considered central to social and economic competitiveness and societal health (UK Council for Science and Technology, 2007; European Commission, 2014; Andres et al, 2015; Fortes, Kehm & Mayekiso, 2014). As a consequence, the education of future researchers, mainly through doctoral education, has become of heightened interest. In this process several global trends and related drivers of such changes can be identified, e.g. professionalization and quality assurance of doctoral education, and researcher mobility. With the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), it is possible to compare educational systems, increase mobility across borders, and more convincingly develop international profiles in higher education programmes. This is seen reflected in the development of a generic doctoral curriculum (Green 2009) and a "transdisciplinary doctorate" (Willetts, Mitcell, Abeysuriya, & Fam, 2012).

However, besides aligning higher education programmes across national contexts the EQF can be said to increase competition among universities, which becomes visible through the benchmarking systems and the global ranking systems in relation to which individual universities navigate. Thus, the term 'global' should be understood with a few reservations. Despite the many similar strategies globally, a lot of policy engineering takes place on regional and national levels still. As Fortes, Kehm and Mayekiso (2014) point out, the tendency towards increase in "quality assurance at the European level should not be underestimated" (p.100), and further they state that the European Commission "acts as a true policy entrepreneur" (ibid.). In a similar vein, Teichler (2004) has pointed to the fact that "nations and strategic policies of national governments continue to play a major role in setting the frames for international communication, cooperation and mobility as well as for international competition. Therefore, the frequent use of the term 'globalization' might be based on misunderstandings" (Teichler, 2004, p.21). So, following Teichler, globalisation of doctoral education is not always global, but regional or national, and a consistent meaning of globalisation is hard to get hold on.

This is seen when universities, as described by Gudmundsson (2008), ensure that doctoral programs promote the development of transferrable skills, thus meeting the needs of the wider employment market, *and* at the same time call for better training of doctoral students' discipline specific research skills necessary for

academic environments specifically. Also a tension is seen in the aim of formalising doctoral education and enhancing the amount of course-bound work for students during the PhD – when at the same time political fractions state that “[o]verregulation of doctoral programs should be avoided” as doctoral education is seen as “a source for human capital for research but is also an extremely important part of the research itself” (Gudmundsson, 2008, p. 77). Also, the tension is visible in the dual focus of encouraging doctoral students to go abroad and to strengthen their international (and disciplinary) networks, *and* at the same time develop training programs and support systems that anchor doctoral education more closely to the home university infrastructure. This global-national-local tension has been sharply addressed by Andres and her team of researchers:

Originating as a universal degree with universal credentials, the increasing focus on internationalization and mobility paradoxically makes visible how diverse, complex, and in some cases incomparable, the PhD degree has become. Promotion of doctoral student mobility and concomitant alignment of different research programs and structures of different doctoral schools have become exceedingly difficult and has the potential to create many problems and unwanted strain for individual doctoral students and universities alike.

(Andres et al, 2015, p.11)

Because of the many diverse, and somewhat conflicting, agendas present in the globalisation policies of doctoral education, I argue that the term ‘torn curriculum’ can be applied. The term is inspired by the concept of ‘torn pedagogy’ within doctoral education promoted in my earlier work (Bengtsen, 2016a), and it suggests that globalisation agendas of doctoral education reveal mutually opposed educational strategies at work making the institutional practice for intellectual leaders, administrators, research programme directors, doctoral supervisors and students a highly challenging, and perhaps unsolvable, academic practice.

However, instead of fanning the flames of a bleak and somewhat pessimistic discourse about the future of doctoral education, I wish to discuss what I see to be overlooked potentials of globalisation agendas, not in spite of but exactly *because of* these inherent tensions of a globalised doctoral curriculum. This is argued through the use of the concepts of ‘nested contexts’ within doctoral education (McAlpine & Norton, 2006; McAlpine & Åkerlind, 2010) and higher education ‘ecologies’ (Barnett, 2013; Barnett, 2011) and ‘doctoral ecologies’ (Bengtsen, 2016b). Through these concepts I show that globalisation strategies of doctoral education may indeed enhance the curricular cohesion and the synergy between different institutional, cultural, and academic contexts. I present how globalisation agendas may open

doctoral education up and connect the PhD to not only international disciplinary arenas, but also to a world beyond the campus made manifest through a culturally diverse and existentially enhanced PhD process and learning environment. I argue that we should acknowledge that globalisation does not only make possible 'standardisation' initiatives through course alignment and benchmarking between universities, but that globalisation reveal to us the great diversity in thinking, research approaches, pedagogy, and learning and coping strategies, taking place in different regions, countries, at different institutions and by different individuals. As the ecological approach makes visible: through the perspective of globalisation we not merely learn how universities and educational systems align and correspond, but also how they differ and reveal a global doctoral curriculum that is mongrel, diverse, and idiosyncratic when linked to national contexts, institutional habits and norms, and personal values. This way globalisation discourses may help us realise a diverse, multifarious and ecological curriculum within doctoral education.

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