

Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (All Submissions)

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The Affective Ecology of Internationalisation in Japanese Higher Education

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Research Domain: International Perspectives and context (IPC)

Abstract: The Internationalisation of higher education is a polyvalent policy discourse, saturated in conceptual and ideological ambiguity. As a policy paradigm with performative effects, it merges commodification, exploitation and opportunity. It is a container for multiple aspirations, anxieties, and affordances. Mobility combines modernisation, detraditionalisation, and expansiveness, with knowledge capitalism, linguistic imperialism, liminality, and market dominance. There are notable policy shadows and silences, especially relating to the emerging subjectivities, motivations and narratives of migrant academics and international doctoral researchers. This paper explores the affective economy of internationalisation drawing upon interview data gathered in fifteen private, five national and eight public universities in Japan with thirty- four migrant academics and thirteen international doctoral researchers. What emerged from our study is that internationalisation policies, processes and practices generate multiple affective engagements. Internationalising oneself can be repressive and generative, with migrant academics and doctoral researchers finding themselves both vulnerable and animated by their experiences.

Paper: Desirable and Disparaged Differences: Migrant Academics in Japan

Internationalisation in higher education has become a container for multiple aspirations, anxieties, and affordances. In the neoliberal economic framing, the ideal internationalised subject is presented as a neutral category - unburdened by embodiment, social difference, or affect. Yet borders,

boundaries and spatialities are social as well as material constructions which extend beyond the notion of physical space (Anthias, 2012). Internationalisation draws on imagined virtuous flows of knowledge production and exchange, and is presented as an assemblage of detraditionalisation, expansiveness, and opportunity for individuals, organisations and nation states. The assemblage of internationalisation can include an underbelly or shadow relating to market values, male and ethnic dominance, commodification and disposability of academic labour, linguistic imperialism, and knowledge capitalism (Morley et al, 2019). The social benefits of multiculturalism, prejudice reduction, cosmopolitanism and soft power are blended with the economic benefits of global competitiveness, prestige, added employability value and elite research concentration. The immaterial or affective labour (Bialostok and Aronson, 2016; Oksala, 2016) that is required to install and maintain an internationalised academic identity and navigate the translations and antagonisms from everyday encounters with difference is substantially under-estimated.

The Affective Ecology

Internationalisation policy and process is formed by, and productive of affect. By affect, we mean emotions, responses, reactions and feelings that are construed as relational and transpersonal rather than located just in the interior individual subject. Firth (2016: 124) argues that 'states can alter structures of affect through policy and discourse, and they do so to suit the needs of neoliberal capital'. The political economy of neoliberalism in the late capitalist economy has been installed via material, discursive and affective means. There has been a re-articulation of measure and its relationship to value (Clough et al. 2007). While this is all presented as a rational, objective and meritocratic process, it relies on a subterranean world of recognition, misrecognition, discrimination, inequalities and affect. Internationalisation policy discourse is saturated in affect. It is embedded in policy formation including fear about missing out (FOMO), and imagined exclusionary futures, anxiety about catching and keeping up with the global 'winners', and trial by public exposure involves shame about private in-house matters being publicised in the public domain such as the global league tables.

Higher Education, Knowledge Exchange and Policy Learning in the Asian Century

The Centre for Higher Education and Equity Research (CHEER) and the Research Institute of Japan, the UK, and Europe (RIJUE), gathered interview data over two years (2017 and 2018) in fifteen private, five national and eight public universities in Japan with thirty- four migrant academics (ten women and twenty-four men), and thirteen international doctoral researchers (five women and eight men). Our sample included migrant academics (short, medium and long-stay), and doctoral researchers in the humanities, social sciences and STEM disciplines. Twenty-five migrant academics were incoming from Australia, China, France, Germany, India, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Korea, the UK, and the USA, and nine were Japanese who had worked in Canada, Germany, the UK, and the USA. The doctoral researchers came from Bangladesh, China, Ghana, Nepal, Philippines, South Korea, Syria, Taiwan, USA and Vietnam. We investigated how internationalisation is implemented, experienced, impeded or imagined in Japan, and intersected mobility with issues of equity and affect.

Our questions focused on the multiple and divergent ways of encountering and understanding difference and included: what was driving the internationalisation policy agenda in Japan, how was it being implemented; what were their personal, professional and academic motivations and experiences as migrant academics and doctoral researchers, and what support and preparation they had received.

Punishing Precarity

Affective intensity is exacerbated when one is negotiating contracts, visas, and employment and study regimes in a country different from the homeland. Precarity relates not only to contractual arrangements, but also to an affective or existential state, understood at once as a source of 'political subjection, of economic exploitation and of opportunities to be grasped' (Lazzarato, 2004). Precarity has been described as a form of 'embodied capitalism' (Tsianos and Papadopoulos, 2006). Migrant academics, as non-citizens (Japan does not allow dual citizenship) can be positioned as precarious, contingent or flexible workers. Migrants are simultaneously privileged (especially if they are white, male Anglophone from the Global North), vulnerable, and susceptible to injury (Butler, 2004), with identities located between calculative choice and victims of geopolitical and socio-economic flux, flexible accumulation, and uncertainty. Success is available to some and foreclosed for others. Precarity was experienced by our participants in relation to contracts, visas and in relation to differential services and interactions. In the process of hierarchisation and spatialisation of labour, certain work was outsourced to migrant academics, as they can represent a form of disposable labour. Our research reported many examples of migrant academics being subjected to commodity logic; recruited not for their disciplinary knowledge or research expertise, but simply to teach English—either as a second language to Japanese students and staff, or to teach programmes in English (EMI) to attract more international students and hence augment the internationalisation data for their universities. Language was a site of affective intensity—the promotion of the English Language as a signifier of internationalisation, and the challenges of being a non-Japanese native speaker. Our research found that many migrant academics were of material and symbolic value to their Japanese universities. They taught programmes in English, taught English as a foreign language and augmented the diversity statistics. Tension existed between policy aspirations to internationalise and resistance to linguistic imperialism (Morley et al, 2019).

Concluding Comments

While internationalisation offers transformative professional and rich personal experiences, it can also reproduce dominant social and geopolitical hierarchies, regimes and exclusions. Our affective readings of the narratives of migrant academics and doctoral researchers are not a truth, but a way in which to explore the mobility/power conjunction in so far as they highlight how internationalisation is differentially felt, resisted, imagined, mediated, negotiated and desired. Mobility suggests a linguistic antithesis to stuckness, but provides new forms of stickiness and entrapment e.g. the

precarity of short-term contracts, 'outsider' identity challenges, and the requirement to adapt to traditional/conventional gender regimes. On the one hand, it symbolises a new, enriched, post-national cosmopolitanism for individuals, knowledge and higher education systems, but could also represent a form of disposability and deletion in the accelerated market economy of the neoliberal global academy.

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