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INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Bailey, L. (2024) *Challenging the Internationalisation of Education: A Critique of the Global Gaze*. London/New York, Routledge.

For several decades now, the traction surrounding international education started gaining notably. We can even say that there was and still is an atmosphere of hype around internationalisation in this sphere of human endeavour, and there can be several roots we can find for such a situation; people travel and move around the world for different reasons more than ever before; some of them leave their homes for good, in search of better employment, i.e. living conditions; some change countries since their professions may ask for such dynamics; many students opt for going abroad, leaving their homes and home countries – not only to get closer to internationally-recognised degrees but also to broaden their horizons and become citizens of the world. The reasons listed are just a drop in the ocean of those leading to countless contacts among cultures taking place daily and wherever one can imagine – in a hospital waiting room, cinema, on a train, plane, in a nearby bakery, etc., and it seems that the world we belong to specifically spotlights the concept of international education – as one of our answers to present-day demands.

With thousands of people engaged in its practices (both those who teach and those who learn), international education is no longer a novelty – no matter what cycle we take into consideration – be it pre-school, primary, secondary or tertiary-level education. Theories accompanying the phenomenon differentiate among several forms. Broadly speaking, there are institutions aimed at expatriates, as well those who also invite children who have returned to their home countries; many schools open their doors to all the children residing in the country where they are

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situated, irrespective of their country of origin, while relying on internationally recognised curricula; we can also find those dominantly focused on promoting a globalised view of the world, and nurturing future global citizens (a number of different subcategories and forms of such schools are available).

Finding yourself in a multinational, plurilingual setting is most certainly one of the reasons for attending and/or sending your children to international schools; in any case, many choose them as they want to secure some enhanced opportunities although they haven't moved anywhere yet (but might plan to do so in the future); also, given their specific programmes, that equip you with great language command, cutting-edge trends in the fields/courses examined, even those who have no plans related to moving abroad choose international schools along their educational paths.

Despite a number of advantages, some of which are listed above, internationalising practices are undoubtedly, just like all the other practices, characterised by both strengths and weaknesses and the text *Challenging the Internationalisation of Education: A Critique of the Global Gaze* is addressing the other side of the coin – aspects still leaving some room for improvement. Its delicately selected 10 chapters communicate some of the heated issues of the present moment – including, but not restricted to – globalisation per se, the status of refugees, roles of the West and other parts of the world, and other constraints revolving around this social concept. The portrayed critique *sui generis*, is based on real-life scenarios, vivid examples coming from different parts of the world, questioning the significance and the role of internationalising activities today.

Chapter 1 – *Introduction – Two faces of internationalisation* – apart from setting the scene for everything to come at later stages, this chapter also signals the overall tone of the book – highlighting the fact that it will give rise to many of the questions that haven't been answered so far. The chapter confirms what we can expect is fighting some common stereotypes vis-a-vis international schooling, i.e., bursting the bubble we have been surrounded with. The author opens it by presenting personal experience in the field, making it all experiential and even more legit. In the introductory chapter – some useful differentiations, between/among like the one of globalisation VS internationalisation are tackled, just like political, financial, and other influences dealing with this issue. Highlighting the fact she does not regard the phenomenon as solely negative, the author simply questions the status of being international and aims to shed some additional light on different aspects that might possibly, as stated earlier, disprove many myths created around international education.

Chapter 2 – *The international turn in Education: A short History*. This is a chapter the role of which is also setting the scene – this time not for what the text itself covers, but the development of the examined concept up to this moment, providing in this way the readers who are not knowledgeable about the subject matter with some background that can undoubtedly simplify their understanding of the whole picture presented. Here we actually go back to the Middle Ages that also witnessed some form of international encounters in schooling; the chapter further explores the fact that many eras of human development witnessed rather national than international character in education, as a result of socio-economic settings countries of the world have respectively found themselves in. It continues to illustrate – the practices pertaining to higher education where internationalisation was supported by a number of programmes established for this purpose; the role of supranational organisations in this regard; development of international schooling that is still interpreted with much flexibility, i.e., in a number of ways. The chapter ends with some of the possible reasons that might have led to the views we have today and the relevant reference list (which will be the fashion all throughout the book).

Chapter 3 – *The global education industry. Selling learning abroad* – focuses on the cultures that are international education providers, and those that are users or the target audience in the field, primarily through a business, economic-wise lenses. The chapter revolves around the phrase of Global Education Industry – i.e., a number of different relevant factors, players in the field, profit, roles, sectors included and more. The knowledge economy in this regard and how we understand it has changed over years, due to both internal and external factors surrounding this walk of life, with the phenomena of marketisation, westernisation, and power playing important roles in how we have always seen it. Upon introducing them, the chapter underlines its main messages – that education has become a financially impactful player in the field, still not available to all those interested, that is, still potentially favouring some cultures and/or groups over others.

Chapter 4 – *Policy borrowing in international contexts. The West knows best* – continuing where the previous chapter left off, the fourth part of the text is dominantly focused on the status of governments in the education industry area, through the lenses of dominant and subordinate parts of the world. Exchanging good practices is not a novelty – on the contrary, such activities characterise all the spheres of human endeavour, education included. However, it seems that all the good practices in the area have come and are still arriving from the West (China, Australia, New Zealand, Chile included apart from the USA and UK only), while the remaining parts of the world usually opt for following suit. By relying on a vivid

example of Bahrain, the author questions how beneficial such practices are to the users, i.e., the students and other participants. Other than that, the chapter raises questions pertaining to the impact of technology, motivation standing behind different organisations, and partnerships, as well as accreditation of both the programmes and teachers engaged in the international education sector. It ends by reminding us of the new, still developing role of the state (the one the state might and/or should have) in such processes.

Chapter 5 – *Preparing students for a globalised world. Global classroom.* Unlike the previous chapters that investigated some phenomena surrounding those who study internationally, the fourth section is spotlighting the direct participants; their experiences, competitiveness international education (and/or schooling) might inspire, programmes/curricula they are exposed to, as well as the notion of English as a medium of teaching/communicating in intercultural classrooms are central points covered in the chapter. While examining competence and trying to define what an ideal international student can be, this part of the text tackles well-known practices of International Baccalaureate and PISA testing. Despite its initial and nominal goal to make education universal, globalised, measurable in a recognisable way, and unified to a certain extent, this is one more chapter that confirms that internationalisation hasn't met it so far – but triggered and brought to surface some engrained differences, inequalities – skill, finance, language-wise, etc.

Chapter 6 – *Travel and construction of excellence. International schools.* One of the central questions the author poses here is what prerequisites are met when defining an institution as an international one, while linking it to the activities of travelling, i.e. movement. In answering the question/-s, a constant rise in international schools is acknowledged here, with significant growth in the future is envisioned as well. The chapter continues to address some of the ideas already tackled via the text's previous sections – with international mindedness (its advantages and disadvantages), and the awareness of national, as well as some of the phenomena at its core. Given the concluding sections, pointing to inequalities, competitiveness, elitism, or even Westernisation, we might all experience in the examined field, many of which were tested via an illustrative *International Advisor* case study, it could be said that the sixth section of the book follows suit – and goes hand in hand with the previous ones.

Chapter 7 – *Refugee education. Permanently excluded.* A delicate yet omnipresent topic of education available to refugees, just like the very title suggests, is in the focus of the chapter. Although refugee students are usually not characterised as those belonging to the international group – parts of the experience they go through is inevitably similar to the one of students officially described as international. Then

again, many features most definitely differ as well, since refugees, unlike other students, do not find themselves in intercultural encounters, and foreign countries as a result of their wish – and even when it happens, it is not always the case that they would be provided with an access to (international) education (supported by a Malaysian example here). Given the trauma they must have gone through to this or that extent and the status which is not always characterised by bright features, despite some movements made in the direction of providing refugees with education, they do with no doubt represent a *sui generis* international students category. The topic is closed on a positive note, advocating more inclusive practices in what we see and name (as) international.

Chapter 8 – *Imperial professors and academic tourists. Paid to be white*. The eighth part of the text opens up with one of the author’s personal experiences pertaining to the concept of whiteness – setting the scene for the rest of the chapter – that addresses race in the field of international education and questions its exclusivity, and the notion of elitism it might bring. The fact that white academics can easily be preferred over other teachers – who should learn from the white ones and look up to them – is challenged here via a number of illustrative examples still portraying some stereotypes, prejudices, even fears of those participating in such practices. Academic exchanges, migrations, as well as the notion of EMI are also seen through the lenses of whiteness here, confirming that even if you move abroad, as a *less-privileged* teacher, in order to make yourself more *elitist, international, globalised, language proficient* – some constraints tend to *live through* it all, and leave traces on both your academic and professional development. This section ends by spotlighting the fact that the global gaze, at the heart of the text itself is actually nothing but white gaze and invites changes in that regard, offering a vivid example of the *non-white/Western* Teacher Award.

Chapter 9 – *Certification and curriculum in international context. Colonialism by degrees*. Improvements in ICT have enabled many things that would be unimaginable in the past – today, we can rely on, and even attend countless MOOC courses supported by highly-developed web educational platforms and even obtain our degrees in that way – without any needs to leave our home countries, or our homes. This has undoubtedly brought a new wave of changes into the area of international education/schooling and raised some new questions regarding the attributes characterising it. To dig deeper, the chapter relies on the examples of well-know certifications, that is, those of International Baccalaureate and Cambridge International (Assessment) that have, it seems, *divided strengths* over the world, still dominantly monitoring it all from the parts of the world previously described as

more privileged. Given its high popularity, still on the increase (the fact that the British Council distributed 1.6 million IELTS tests in 2021-2022, post-pandemic years, says much about the trend), and the imminent link with international classrooms, the chapter does not forget about language (proficiency) certification – available in all the corners of the world for decades now. The chapter continues to provide insightful case studies of international encounters and cooperation in Malaysia and Qatar – questioning, for the former, the viability, as well as advantages and disadvantages of offshore campuses and, for the latter, the role of social and cultural suitability in welcoming and integrating internationalisation.

Chapter 10 – *Conclusion. The global gaze*. The concluding section reminisces about the topics the book has covered – isolating some take-home messages. It restates that international education is still a field with much room for improvement – with a sea of possibilities to change some of the engrained practices and enhance the accessibility to international schooling/education, as well as some attributes surrounding it. Although the tone of the book could, at first, be defined as a criticising one, given its very title and opening stages – *Challenging the Internationalisation of Education: A Critique of the Global Gaze* – is an extensive, insightful, and above all, extremely useful source for all the stakeholders in the field, and those who are just about to embark on any international adventure.