

Jude Carroll and Janette Ryan, *Teaching International Students – Improving Learning for All*, Routledge: London, 2005.

This text addresses the phenomenal rise in numbers of international students attending universities in English-speaking countries. The volume contains 16 chapters divided into 3 parts: Cultural migration and learning; Methodologies and pedagogies; and Internationalising the curriculum. The text is timely because, as the Introductory chapter notes, universities in English-speaking countries have seen a huge rise in numbers of international students in recent years. In 2000-2001, 11% of higher education students in the UK were international students, by 2005 this figure had risen to 16% (pp.3-4). This increase, the authors argue, requires those who teach and manage higher education (seemingly the target audience of the work) to make adjustments in their educational practices. The text is not targeted at any particular subject group or discipline but this does not detract from the usefulness to those in the Arts, Design and Communication fields and there is much in this book that is useful, particularly if one is facing international students for the first time.

The authors pre-empt criticism that international students are in some way deficient, that they cause the 'dumbing-down' of higher education or that they are "lacking in independent, critical thinking skills; are plagiarisers or rote learners, speaking broken English and have awkward ways of participating in class" (p.6). Instead, it is argued throughout that the presence of international students necessitates a more inclusive approach to teaching in H.E., one that recognises diversity in the student body. If the role of universities is to extend educational opportunities to a broader constituency then such trends should be applauded and welcomed – "by adopting approaches that are inclusive of international students, we will also be more generally inclusive of a broader range of learners" (p.6).

This general approach is commendable. Moreover, it should be recognised that the specific needs of international students will be additional to those from other non-traditional student communities. International students present a range of challenges that are not identical to the challenges and needs of other previously underserved communities and to meet these will require additional resources. In short this means that the traditional 'one size fits all' approach to teaching will have to be broadened to a far more heterogeneous model in which differing learning strategies are possible.

Following the introductory chapter the first section of the book deals with issues of 'cultural migration'. This section is composed of four chapters of differing usefulness and length. Chapter two, titled 'Maximising international students cultural capital' is very short (a little over three pages) and discursive and offers little in terms of useful or practical ideas. Chapter three concerns the usefulness of possessing knowledge of a students' originating culture and offers interesting points concerning the cultural baggage of teachers and the development in teachers of reflexive 'meta cultural awareness', the act of decentring of western cultural practices. Chapter four offers some very useful advice on developing explicitness in teaching practice. This is to foreground knowledge about expectations that most lecturers presume students to possess prior to entering HE. The problems of learning in a different language to one's mother tongue are

examined in chapter five and some simple strategies for assisting such learners are offered. These seem generally good practice (as indeed do many of the practices in the book) regardless of whether a student has English as a mother tongue or not.

The second section of the book examines methodologies and pedagogies suitable for international students. The first of the six chapters in this section deals with what are termed 'intercultural competencies' and the way in which teaching should focus upon 'adding value' to students' existing abilities rather than enforcing a previously existing model of successful student activity. That is, teaching should acknowledge the prior and diverse educational experience of students and seek to build upon it rather than force the student to conform to a strict cultural template. Chapter seven is a very useful examination of issues related to the practice of written academic English and contains much useful information and tips. Group work and the ways in which it can be used to foster intercultural understanding between students is dealt with in chapter eight. This topic is further explored in chapter nine in which the actual mechanics of organising mixed groups of international and home students is addressed. Chapter ten provides a description of various techniques and adjustments that lecturers can adopt to help international students. These recommendations are extensive and very useful and the chapter ties together many of the themes and ideas introduced elsewhere in the book. Chapter eleven is a useful guide to the problems faced in supervising international research students and various techniques that can be used to help the student in their research activity.

The third section of the book consists of five chapters and deals with internationalising the curriculum. The first chapter in this section adopts an institutional approach and examines the rational and methods by which an institution can modify its curriculum to a more international perspective. Chapter thirteen refines this approach and examines the actual 'what is learnt' and 'how it is learnt' of an HE curriculum. This is very useful information and the chapter raises some interesting issues. Chapter fourteen looks at the benefits to students, supervisors and institutions of international research students. The emphasis is very much on Chinese students but the findings of research detailed are applicable for students of other nationalities. Chapter fifteen offers advice on how good practice within an HE institution concerning international students can be shared and the information here would be useful for those organising staff development activities. The final chapter examines some of the problems or instances of 'shock' that international students will face when studying in another country. This is an interesting final chapter and offers some useful insights into the experiences of being a student in a different culture.

Throughout this text there is a distinct attempt to distance itself from what is termed the 'deficit approach' – that international students are in some way lacking. Instead it is argued that international students are different in terms of needs and expectations, they have skills and knowledge and this should be recognised. What is needed, however, are minor adjustments to practice that will allow the skills international students possess to become useful. Such adjustments will not impair the learning experience of non-international students; indeed many of the procedures identified in this volume are good practice and should be in use regardless of the constituency of the student

body. They should not be adopted just for the benefit of international students but would assist in the knowledge and skills acquisition of any student.

Overall this is a useful text and simply for reasons of professional development deserves a read. More experienced academics, especially those who have travelled or taught in other countries may find they already practice much of what is contained in this book but it is still worth reading as it provides some interesting theoretical points.