
BOOK REVIEW

Tools for Teaching in an Educationally Mobile World

Tools for Teaching in an Educationally Mobile World, Carroll, J,
Abingdon: Routledge, 2014

Nick Pearce*

This is the third book in the “Internationalization in Higher Education” series edited by Elspeth Jones for Routledge. This series is aimed at addressing the theme of internationalization through theoretical perspectives and practical examples, and is aimed at those teaching in Higher Education (HE). Whilst other books in the series are focussed on the level of the institution (e.g. Leask, 2015) or beyond (e.g. Ziguas and McBurnie, 2014) this volume is focussed much more on the classroom experience of the educationally mobile student and teacher.

Carroll takes issue with the label ‘international student’ and prefers to focus on diversity. In particular educationally mobile students are diverse in three ways: variations in previous educational experience, language proficiency and their mobility. For her “students are not victims of educational mobility; they are the engines that drive the process” (22). This quote nicely encapsulates the personal empathy that Carroll (a well-travelled student and teacher) feels for these students, who she feels are often reduced to the problematic label of international student, as being somehow deficient in contrast to ‘home’ students.

The book is divided into three sections. The first comprises five chapters and focuses on a discussion of the context, with a focus on the teachers. There is a clear focus in this section on helping teachers accommodate educational diversity, to the benefit of all students. Carroll develops the idea that by making new ideas meaningful to diverse students and acknowledging their prior knowledge and beliefs teachers can promote deeper learning.

The second section starts by acknowledging that all students can find academic language challenging but for those from a non-English speaking background there can be a further challenge, especially if they assume their preparation has been sufficient as they have met the language requirements. There is a good discussion of entry and exit levels of language competence, and the importance of assessing language competence early on and communicating with students the expectation that their language competence will improve over the course of their studies.

The rest of the section focuses on intercultural competence, and again the focus is on acknowledging and making explicit staff and student expectations of behaviour to foster understanding and tolerance of different cultures. This chapter includes a rich discussion of some of the issues in embedding this kind of competence across curricula, and managing some of the anxieties this can provoke.

Even as the first two sections have a good balance of theoretical discussion and practical ‘chalkface’ tips, the last section explicitly turns its attention to the intercultural classroom, with chapters on designing courses, encouraging student participation in lectures, seminars, group work and assessment. These chapters are full of practical suggestions that teachers across different disciplines and at different stages of their careers will find useful and thought provoking.

As somebody who teaches on programmes with a high percentage of educationally mobile students I found this book to be a good mix of a review of an interesting and global literature and a real focus on the issues and challenges faced by teachers. I liked the emphasis on diversity, both of international students and home students, and how the focus of the book is on how teaching in an educationally mobile world should lead to better teaching practice for all students.

One area where I felt the book was strangely silent was on the use of digital tools. Irrespective of the rise of purely online courses, students who travel to another country will be using a range of online tools (typically a VLE) in addition to their time in class. A chapter on designing the online element of teaching to acknowledge and support intercultural learning would have been very useful. What research there is in the area (e.g. Liu et al., 2010; Milheim, 2014) suggests that international students find online learning space just as culturally loaded as the classroom and as much care needs to go into its design as the rest of a course.

Overall I would recommend this book to any university teacher, who is attempting to make their courses relevant and engaging for a diverse student body.

Competing Interests

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

* Durham University Foundation Centre, UK
n.a.pearce@durham.ac.uk

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