**Title: Internationalisation and Education, is it becoming more of a dream than reality?**

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“*The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page*.”– St Augustine

This famous phrase is reported in a blog posted by [Craig Thompson in 2016](https://clearingcustoms.net/2016/04/13/) where he mentions John Feltham publication of English Enchiridion in 1700. The quote continues

“*They that never stir from their home read only one page of this book*”.

However, in a world where planes, trains and automobiles stopped moving and the world came to a sudden halt during the global pandemic of Covid 19, it was clear that many students would not have the opportunity to have any form of internationalisation experience intended as mobility.

At the School of Education, University of Glasgow, Mark Breslin (Lecturer in Health and Wellbeing, University of Glasgow) and I asked ourselves “Is this the university experience we would like our students to have, where they are isolated within their bedrooms or university dorms with little, or in some cases, no interaction with other students?” The answer was clearly NO!

Although the impact of internationalisation through students’ mobility has several benefits at multiple levels and is very complex, it was clear to us, that for many, the chance of exploring and experiencing different cultures, foods, religions, and the social interaction with students from other countries risked becoming a distant memory or even an impossible dream. Yet in the age of technology where distance and digital learning managed to support Education through a global pandemic, it was important to build on the good practice to create alternatives to mobility opportunities such as the Erasmus Mundus project.

In addition, as we emerge from the pandemic the future is unclear as to what internationalisation will look like, if at all. Furthermore, with the UK leaving the European Union, movement between countries is very unclear and there are many barriers that will need to be cleared before free movement of students where they can enjoy similar experiences such as the Erasmus Mundus programme.

As human beings we have the curiosity and the soul of explorers. Take Charles Darwin for example, he was known for his contributions to science as a geologist and scientist as he travelled far and beyond to evolve biology as he collected species from various countries around the world. More recent human travel adventures include NASA and the Mars 2020 preservative Rover Mission which seek out any signs or forms of life and collect samples of rock and soil to return to earth for analysis <https://mars.nasa.gov/mars2020/>

These are all big exploration missions!! You will think … however, for a student studying within Higher Education the exploration wishes as well as the spirit of adventure and excitement remains the same. Internationalisation provides the opportunity for students to explore beyond their own habitat and for many this will be a life changing experience and memories to cherish forever.

Conversations around internationalisation have changed significantly with the challenges which Covid-19 pandemic restrictions and possibly Brexit have presented for student mobility. There has been a shift which has highlighted the impact of internationalization on improving the quality of education, research, and other social goals. Supported by this evidence, and by the wish to improve our students’ experience Mark and I investigated how technology could support active participation of students in international activities by organising cross countries seminars based on multilingual and multicultural approach with a focus on mutual enrichment across international Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers.

Participants were year 3 undergraduate students studying at the University of Glasgow, School of Education, on the Master of Education (MEDuc) ITE programme and Italian student teachers on the course “Scienze della formazione” at the Niccolo’ Cusano University, Rome supported by the participant tutors included Mark, myself and Annamaria Mariani (Lecturer in Education University Niccolo’ Cusano).

Several sessions were organised and remotely delivered to both cohort of students with a careful blending of tutors’ expertise, focused on their cultural and language diversity; a carefully planned topic of high interest for both countries: Parental Engagement in pupil’s Education; and finally, a very well taught integration of the sessions’ content and task requirements into both Universities’ assessment agenda. Results showed a mutual enrichment and active participation which went beyond any expectations with elements of e-networking and overcome of language, communication, and even possible stereotype barriers.

This experience opened the hopes that meaningful international experience can be organised by relying on digital technology and the passion of Universities’ tutors as well as the wish to exchange knowledge and good practice that characterise Students around the world!