

Internationalization of education.

J.A. Bruijn

Fantastic to be here, few weeks ago I was on vacation in Finland with my family, that is to say with my wife and kids. Our dog Dazzle, cat Johnny and hamster Jessy unfortunately could not join us, irrespective of the question of whether or not they can be regarded as family members.

Internationalization of education is all about socio-cultural and economic success of future generations in the world of tomorrow. Over the centuries, mankind has devised technology that connects us to the unknown, at ever increasing speed. Thus, in the past 100 years the cost of communication and transport has decreased over 90%. Meanwhile, the time necessary for new technology to find its way into our daily life has decreased dramatically. Today, we see unprecedented physical and virtual transport and exchange of people, cultures, religions, habits, systems, markets, capital, information, and values. This brings about both new possibilities and challenges. And when trying to predict the future by extrapolating from the past, we meet increasing unpredictability. Still, in preparing new generations for that unpredictable future by sustaining their development and visionary education today, we have the obligation to envisage. Yet, increasing contact with and dependence upon the unknown challenge our fear of it. A fear that has protected and selected us through evolution and is therefore deeply rooted within our minds and souls. So, after the postwar success of knowledge- and later on also skill- and proficiency-based education, the new challenge, or third dimension if you wish, may well be in understanding unknown minds and thoughts, cultures and values, love and hate, systems and economies. Or, at least, in being well prepared for openness and life-long learning in these contexts. For recognizing and overcoming one's own resistance and fear. For empathy, or understanding and appreciating the unknown other. For converting allophobia into allophilia, in order to be successful both socio-culturally and economically in tomorrow's space and time. The relation between the personalizing, the socializing and the qualifying role of education, as depicted by Biesta, is underlined by the recent Platform "Education 2032". And let's be clear: this is not an academic discussion, but a practical matter of great urgency. All members of new generations should be allowed significant international experience in order to understand the impact of changing one's decorum. They should master non-mother-tongue languages. And the content of their educational curriculum should be significantly internationally- and empathy-oriented. Mobility, languages, and content. That is the trias of internationalization of education defined ten years ago already by our national advisory council on education, of which I was a member at the time. Spreading out this trias over our four educational sectors, a matrix

emerges consisting of twelve practical agenda's that lay before us. Three logical, ambitious, continuous and cosmopolitic learning lines running through four sectors, namely primary, secondary, vocational, and higher education, embracing all members of new generations.

So, how to realize this and where do we stand today? Let's pick out and focus on a few of the twelve boxes indicated and define some practical points for the agenda.

Mobility in primary education clearly is mostly a virtual and digital issue. Sister schools in other countries, sharing lessons. On the other end of the spectrum, significant mobility in higher education was meant to be launched by introduction of the bachelor-master system. Many european countries have now introduced that system. The current challenge is in harmonizing it to the extent that Bachelor degree holders can enter Master programs elsewhere smoothly, without having to repeat curricular components or repair shortcomings. But even in trying to keep up with these developments, we are already running behind on reality. A digital revolution of virtual mobility is now evolving rapidly in higher education embodied by massive open online courses and the like. This sheds an entire new and challenging light on issues such as the value, necessity and cost-benefit ratio of physical co-presence of students and teachers on campuses and the like, and the role of our national governments in financing and quality assurance systems. Before you know it, the national orientation of such systems becomes a hampering rather than stimulating factor with regards to mobility and quality. Moving into the direction of one European space of higher education should potentially be on the political agenda, including harmonized financing, quality transparency and both intracurricular and labour market tuning. But even that may already be outdated, with the digital revolution being a global rather than a European one.

So much for mobility. The second leg of the trias of international education regards **languages**. The importance of language education was underlined by George Bush junior, when he noticed that the problem with the French is that there is no French word for entrepreneur. The ambition of Europe and the Netherlands is that at least three-quarters of young citizens should master at least two foreign languages at the B1 level of the European Reference System. The Education Council considers this to be extremely ambitious, but nonetheless feasible. To achieve this will require measures to be taken in primary education and senior secondary vocational education in particular. Teaching the first new language should be initiated early in primary education by using the so-called immersion method, as shown by neuro-linguistics and reviewed in detail by our national advisory board in several of their reports. Research on bilingual children has confirmed what many already suspected:

puberty is not the best time to start a new language. From the moment they are born children are able to pick up two or even three languages, naturally and easily. So, from the moment they start school, they can be taught new ones through immersion methods. To this end, only last year the Dutch law was changed in order to allow up to 15% of education in our primary schools to be presented in a foreign language. In my opinion, the next step should be to change this percentage from a maximum to an apply-or-explain arrangement, and to make sure that all kids and not only the most privileged are allowed to benefit. Currently, this issue depends too much upon the vision and motivation of individual local school leadership and drive. In addition, there still is substantial resistance against the introduction of English teaching in the early grades, since there is the common fear that it will be at the expense of the development of Dutch, even though a wealth of research findings in other countries has shown that this is untrue. More recent research is focusing on the Dutch setting. The findings indicate that an early start with English eventually leads to higher levels of proficiency.

The percentage of primary schools starting with English at the age of four has risen to 15% in recent years. Still, most schools spend at most only an hour a week on English, and most teachers are not native speakers. The majority of schools do not know which level they aim to reach at the end of primary school, even though tests are now available. This obviously hampers and discourages secondary schools to create ongoing learning lines built on the primary end level.

Nevertheless, bilingual education at the secondary level is a Dutch success story, thanks to the schools involved. Today, half of subjects are taught in English or another foreign language. This started 25 years ago, as a cautious experiment by a few innovative schools. Since then it has matured and grown into a mainstream route. The most recent count unravelled that 120 secondary schools are offering bilingual education - almost one in five of all secondary schools – catering to nearly 30,000 pupils. Thus, the system of bilingual secondary schools is now well established and is moving from the highest school types, such as pre-university, to lower types of secondary education. It has shown to be effective there as well. Its success has led to new demands by both parents and schools to introduce new and better forms of bilingual primary education.

Another issue is that very few schools focus on bilingual education in other languages than English. Only two schools of the many in the region bordering Germany offer bilingual Dutch-German tracks. A great pity, considering that Germany is our most important economic partner. According to Fenedex, the federation of Dutch exporting companies, we are lacking over € 7 billion of yearly sales due to our poor knowledge of the German language.

At the other end of the spectrum, higher education, we should consider English to be the standard language not only in our Master but also in suitable Bachelor programs in order to allow for incoming mobility at that level. This is especially urgent now that outgoing mobility is strongly on the rise, involving primarily our most talented students. This demands incoming compensation for several reasons including the quality of our future labour force and that of our international classrooms. As the Education Council has stated, higher education taught in English should have to meet additional quality requirements: teachers should have to demonstrate an appropriate level of proficiency in the language and students should be able to show that they are able to follow the programme at the required level. International students and teachers who follow a programme of study or teach in higher education in the Netherlands for more than one year should be given sufficient opportunity to learn Dutch and become familiar with Dutch culture.

The Education Council calls on institutions to develop a vision on their languages policy in order to make considered choices for the language in which programmes or modules are taught. It is important that institutions clearly communicate their considerations so that students can make better informed decisions when deciding which study programme to choose. The quality of English-language education should be assured by making it an explicit component of the accreditation framework

So we have discussed mobility and languages. The third leg of the trias is **content**. Content may well be the most challenging of the three components of internationalized education. Interesting examples of curricula with an internationally oriented content are the International Primary and Middle years programmes and the International Baccalaureate or IB. Conservative politicians of different parties in The Netherlands remain reluctant to opening up curricula like the IB for non-expat-kids for fear of undermining the Dutch culture.

I think they underestimate both the strength of that culture, and the need for evolution of it through external orientation, a virtue which has actually always been its unique selling point. According to the IB organisation (IBO) only three schools in the Netherlands offer the

IB-course to regular pupils. So, development of International content is still largely in the hands of individual schools, teachers and publishers. Ofcourse, I agree with EP-Nuffic that a success factor of international education is in its bottom-up, organic growth. Its evolution driven by the wish of parents, schools and pupils themselves. And now that that it is gaining strength, schools are teaming up rapidly, organizing platforms and issues like quality control and examination, and without interference by the governance, but rather with support of in particular Ep-Nuffic. But the question remains whether pace meets need. Whether no one is left behind. Whether we are not creating a dichotomy.

As pointed out by the Education Council, international mobility also involves content, since it requires comparability of learning achievements across national borders.

This has consequences for curriculum and degree coordination. The position of Dutch education in the international context could be strengthened by ensuring that examinations meet international standards. In higher education, the institutions and education systems compete with each other in international comparisons in terms of the quality of graduates. Consequently, this quality will increasingly have to be demonstrated on the basis of examinations and assessments, the reliability and validity of which are transparent and world-class.

Furthermore, the Netherlands could also regard its education system and educational services as export products. The sector could be extremely valuable for other countries. This applies, for instance, to knowledge and expertise about assessment, examination, accreditation and quality assurance.

Coming back to the subject of content. As already touched upon, one of the main goals of international education is to understand and appreciate the unknown. This domain involves empathy. In a recent issue of the journal *Psychology Today*, empathy is described as the experience of understanding another person's condition from their perspective. One places oneself in their shoes and feels what they are feeling. Given the current massive physical and virtual mobility of people, values and markets, empathy is an essential skill in both our culture and our economy. Lack of empathy is a major source of rejection, conflict, economic loss and even war. Interpretation of message is all too often imperfect. For that reason, in a country not far south of us, recently the text on the milk boxes had to be changed from 'open here' to 'open at home'.

According to the leading business magazine *Forbes*, empathy Is also The Force That Moves Business forward. As Jayson Boyers put it, "behind every successful business, you are likely to find a leader who has mastered the skill of empathy. One of the hallmarks of a successful business is its ability to harness creativity to constantly push into new territory. Without growth and innovation, businesses stagnate and eventually fade away. Those with staying power, however, have mastered an intangible, often overlooked factor that allows them to focus on the future with clarity: empathy. While that may surprise many, the ability to connect with and relate to others—empathy in its purest form—is the force that moves businesses forward. Though the concept of empathy might contradict the modern concept of a traditional workplace—competitive, cutthroat, and with employees climbing over each other to reach the top—the reality is that for business leaders to experience success, they need to not just see or hear the activity around them, but also relate to the people they serve. Successful business leaders are receptive to disruption and innately aware of what is going on in their organizations both internally and externally." In today's, and even more so in tomorrow's world, this implies a transnational, transcultural context. In this respect, the term

'internationalization of education' falls short of what we are really talking about. 21st century skills have been described as the feature people are better at than computers, constituting a prerequisite for socio-cultural and economic success, including finding a job in this digital age: creativity, collaboration, problem solving, entrepreneurship, critical thinking and: empathy!

So in sum, things are going well and we have to thank a number of pioneers for that.

This includes our host today, the Foundation for International Education in the Netherlands, SIO, which since its establishment in 1953 has contributed significantly. Yet, many challenges lay ahead. Internationalization of education is more than ever of utmost and urgent importance to prepare new generations for contributing to a safe and successful future world. It materializes in a mission encompassing mobility, languages and content throughout our four educational sectors. It should be rolled out through the curricula and demands an integral approach and cosmopolitic learning lines.

And as for Dazzle, Johnny and Jessie, they may have a different skin colour and even texture, a different size, a different genetic make-up and language, they may do mostly nothing other than eat and produce food remnants whenever and wherever they like, with us being expected to clean up behind them, but the question as to whether they can be understood and loved and be a part of our family would be an easy one for my kids to answer.

Thank you.