

Talking about Teaching

International students' transition into UK HE
- on the relevance of prior educational
experiences in China, India and Greece

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Today's session

- Introductions
- The Student Diversity and Academic Writing Project
- A short film about undergraduate studies in India
- Exchanging ideas and practices from across the university
- Undergraduate studies in China and Greece
- Discussion on facilitating transitions

International students

Different groups – different requirements and issues:

- UG
- Joint programmes (3+1, 2+2, etc.)
- Exchange students
- **PGT / taught Masters programmes**
- PGR

The Student Diversity and Academic Writing Project

Student Diversity & Academic Writing project

- A three year research project on international students and plagiarism
- HEFCE funding through the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning
- Jointly conducted between Lancaster University Management School and the London School of Economics
- January 2005 – March 2008

Aims of the SDAW project

- to inject timely and topical research results into the debate about the way international students are recruited, prepared and taught and how plagiarism can be deterred
- to develop resources that will be of use to various groups within the higher education sector and support its engagement with the issues of student diversity and academic writing, e.g. teaching staff, senior managers, educational developers, etc.

Four subprojects

- **Project A: Country visits to China, India and Greece**
- Project B: UK Fieldwork (focused on student reception and in-course academic writing)
- Project C: Electronic plagiarism detection
- Project D: Dissemination

Country visits: research focus

- Classroom observation, interviews and focus groups with teaching staff, students & managers
- Library visits
- Interviews with British Council staff, education agents, alumni of British universities and others
- Education fairs, notice boards, student papers, 'hanging out', etc.

The 'film' about undergraduate studies in India

In small groups, please discuss:

- How might this type of information affect your own role in your institution (and those of colleagues)?
- Who else – in your institution – needs to know about the backgrounds of students? Why?

Feedback from the small groups

Taken for granted assumptions (UK)

- Interconnectedness between research and teaching
- Information literacy
- Centrality of writing (more so in some subjects than others)

Educational practices abroad

- Teaching focus (often separate from research)
- Strong exam focus (often exclusive)
- Supremacy of the textbook (limited source use)
- Variability of information literacy (access, quality, etc.)
- Limited writing practice (sometimes none!)
- Citation practices (staff and students)
- Support provision (often commercial)
- Distinction between UG and PG education

Transitions are also affected by

- Students' motivation for leaving / coming
- University marketing and recruitment (how well do you know your agents?)
- Prevalence of the 'deficit model' – where international students are perceived as a less able / more needy or as an aberration of the home student
- Students' varying expectations of staff-student relationships
- The nature and 'distribution' of UK support

How does it work at Leeds?

- Recruitment decisions and processes
- Language proficiency scores
- Pre-sessional language courses (what is the role of writing?)
- Induction
- Information literacy & study skills provision (who? where? when?)
- Early assignments / troubleshooting
- Support provision (stand alone? add-on? integrated?)

Plagiarism

Chances are, most international students don't travel half way around the world (and pay a lot of money) just in order to cheat...

...there are cheaper and less onerous means of procuring a certificate!

Why is it then that so many international students get caught in allegations of academic misconduct in their coursework?

Plagiarism regulations abroad

Our research in China, India and Greece showed that:

- Misconduct regulations oftentimes refer to exams only (because assessment is only by exams!)
- Rules and regulations regarding plagiarism were absent in almost all of the institutions we visited

- Many international students might simply not be aware of the conventions, the notion of copy-paste as an ‘offence’ and the nature of the penalties that apply in the UK
- Rather than focusing on technical ‘solutions’ (plagiarism detection software) that are employed to facilitate prosecution, we may instead wish to focus on the teaching and learning of academic practices by all students

Student Diversity and Academic Writing Project:

<http://www.sdaw.info/>

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