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The Internationalisation of Doctoral Studies: A Wasted Opportunity?

Emma Bettinson

University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, ebettinson@cardiffmet.ac.uk

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Title: The Internationalisation of Doctoral Studies: A Wasted Opportunity?

Author: Emma Bettinson

Affiliation: University of Wales Institute, Cardiff

Contact: ebettinson@cardiffmet.ac.uk

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Abstract:

The internationalisation of higher education has given rise to student mobility ‘*of industrial proportions*’ (Walker, 2014, p. 325). In 2014, the number of international (non-EU) students studying in higher education in the UK had risen to over 435,000, making a contribution of £2.3 billion to UK institutions (UKCISA, 2015). This meant that British universities had the second highest number of international students in the world (after the US) and the proportion of international students in the student body was the second highest globally (Walker, 2014).

The ever-increasing number of international students has attracted the interest of both academics and policy makers in recent years (Bilecen, 2013). However, Bilecen (2013) highlights the lack of research into the experiences of postgraduate international students, despite their importance as high academic achievers, capable of innovation and thereby having an influence at the institutional level and, potentially, at the national level.

This lack of research into the postgraduate international student experience is particularly surprising, considering that, in the UK, international students comprise 50% of full-time research degree students (UKCISA, 2011). In 2013–2014, there were 32,650 international research degree students in the UK (HESA 2014). There has, therefore, been a radical change in the doctoral student cohort in the UK, as these students have brought with them different academic cultures and intellectual traditions (Ryan, 2012).

Ryan (2012) suggests that the doctoral relationship provides a perfect means for the exchange of cultural intellectual ideas and creating new knowledge, which can be transformative for higher education. Rizvi (2010) argues that, in order to encourage and facilitate this exchange, we need an understanding of the complex challenges that doctoral students face whilst negotiating this transnational journey, in order to make decisions regarding the new practices in the doctoral education of these globally mobile students.

This paper emanates from my own PhD research into the challenges of the doctoral journey in Tourism Studies. Whilst it acknowledges that there are many challenges along this journey, it suggests that perhaps the biggest obstacle to cross-cultural exchange is the ‘Academy’ of Tourism Studies itself and its reluctance to embrace the Other.