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Internationalisation and religious inclusion in United Kingdom higher education

STEVENSON, Jacqueline <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3097-6763>

Citation:

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Internationalisation and Religious Inclusion in United Kingdom Higher Education

Jacqueline Stevenson, Centre for Social and Educational

Research across the Lifecourse, Leeds Metropolitan University,

j.stevenson@leedsmet.ac.uk

Abstract

Although not new, the concept of internationalisation, the inclusion of intercultural perspectives and the development of cross-cultural understanding, has gained particular currency and support across the United Kingdom (UK) higher education sector over the last decade. However, within the academic literature, as well as within institutional policy and practice, there has been little disaggregation of the concept of 'culture'; rather there appears to be a tacit belief that all aspects of students' cultures should be valued and 'celebrated' on campus. Through the stories told by fifteen Sikh, Muslim, Jewish and Christian students studying at a UK post-1992 university the paper highlights the ways in which religion, a fundamental aspect of the cultural identity, values and practices of many students, is rarely recognised or valorised on campus. This lack of recognition can act to 'other', marginalise and isolate students and thus undermine the aims of internationalisation, in particular cross-cultural understanding. The paper concludes by arguing that religion should be considered within debates around internationalisation so that all students are represented within a multicultural institutional ethos and to ensure meaningful cross-cultural engagement for all students.

Background and context

Over the past decade United Kingdom (UK) higher education has undergone significant changes, leading to a greater internationalisation of the sector: the limit on the number of home undergraduate students (those students eligible to pay university tuition fees at a lower rate than overseas students) that can be recruited by any particular university or college has seen the sector become increasingly dependent on the recruitment of overseas students, exempt from the student number cap (Universities UK, 2013). Consequently the number of non-European Union students studying in the UK has increased from just 8% of the total student population in 2002–03 to around 12% in 2010–11 (Universities UK, 2012). Alongside this, however, there has been an increasing number of international franchise agreements with overseas partners, meaning that there are now more overseas students studying for UK degrees in their own countries than there are overseas students studying in the UK (HESA, 2013).

These shifts in the demographic make-up of the UK higher education student population has required higher education institutions to develop an increasingly international focus to teaching, learning, assessment (Randall, 2008). Alongside this

need to internationalise the curriculum to support the needs of overseas students, however, there has been an increasing focus on the need to enhance the skills and understanding of UK students so that they can live and work within a global, cultural context. The need to develop both home and overseas students' cross-cultural capability, cross cultural engagement, intercultural competencies and intercultural understanding increasingly permeates not only the pedagogical literature (HEA, 2013) but also equality and diversity policy (Caruana and Ploner, 2010) as well as debates on student employability (Jones, 2013). There has to date, however, been a lack of disaggregation of what constitutes 'culture' within such discourses.

Internationalisation: from mediaeval itinerate scholar to modern day 'global citizen'

The term 'the internationalisation of higher education' incorporates multiple meanings, rationales and approaches, both by and for different stakeholders and according to different contexts and social, cultural and economic imperatives (De Wit, 2010). Recent work by Maringe, Foskett and Woodfield (2013), for example, found that the internationalisation strategies, processes and understanding of diverse global universities were based on three emergent and very different value-driven models: a commercial imperative in western universities; a cultural imperative in Confucian and many Middle East nations; and a curriculum-value driven process in the 'poorer' universities of the south, emphasising the poverty differentials between universities in the north and those in the south. In addition, as De Wit (2010) noted, many definitions of internationalisation address only a small part of internationalisation or emphasise a specific rationale for internationalisation, with most terms used either curriculum related (such as 'intercultural education') or mobility related (such as 'study abroad').One of the most commonly used definitions, however, particularly within a western perspective, is Knight's (2003, p. 2), describing internationalisation as 'the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education'. This can be achieved by sending students and staff out and bringing international students in to higher education institutions. Through such mobility students and staff can develop the understanding needed to incorporate new cultural perspectives and understanding into higher education policy and practices and students can develop the global, intercultural perspectives needed to live and work as 'global citizens' (De Wit, 2010; Killick, 2011).

Incorporating international components into higher education is not new; rather it has its historical precedents in the integration of cosmopolitan perspectives and international orientations within the European mediaeval universities (Sanz and Bergan, 2002). Travel for the sake of learning is also not a modern phenomenon: the scholars and students of the medieval period, for example, were highly mobile, compared to the general population (Knight and de Wit, 1995), whilst the Grand Tour of the 18th Century perhaps most epitomises the desire of wealthy young English men (rarely women) for intellectual self-improvement through travel. The period of the British Empire saw the export of UK systems of higher education to colonial

outposts (Knight and de Wit, 1995) as well as the education of the sons of the Raj in UK universities, whilst post-World War II international student mobility was regarded as fundamental to enhancing intercultural understanding as a precursor to 'international cooperation' or 'international relations' (Knight, 2008, p. 3).

It was not until the 1980s, however, that 'internationalisation' as it is now understood was adopted more systematically by UK universities. The drive to internationalise higher education is now a key strategic element of most UK universities and higher education institutions. Through internationalisation, institutions offer their students and staff an opportunity for 'serving peace and mutual understanding, quality enhancement, a richer cultural life and personality development, the increase of academic quality, technological innovation, economic growth and societal well-being' (Teichler, 2008, p. 4).

The recent focus of universities on employability and thus the development of students as 'global citizens', able to travel and to work   between and within 'cultural silos' (Leask and Carroll, 2011, p. 249), has acted to galvanise institutional approaches to internationalisation. It is now regarded as insufficient that students simply gain a degree whilst at university. Rather they should be involved in processes and practices that enable them to develop the skills and attributes to become 'self-regulating citizens in a globally connected society' (Benfield and Francis, 2008, p. 1). Most higher education institutions in the UK have developed institutional internationalisation strategies in response to these strategic agendas (Harrison and Peacock, 2010). These strategies are, in the main, divided into activities that happen abroad and those that focus on internationalisation 'at home' (Knight, 2004).

However, although nearly 13,000 UK students travelled overseas for study or work on Erasmus programmes in 2010–11 (British Council, undated), UK students are, significantly less likely than their European or other international counterparts to take advantage of such opportunities: in 2011–12 the UK attracted 489,000 international students to its higher education institutions (British Council, 2013). In contrast, only 1.7% of the 2.5 million higher education students in the UK choose to study for their full degree outside the UK, or undertake shorter-term placements (British Council, 2013). Recognising the need to develop cross-cultural interaction and collaboration on campus and within classrooms, therefore, UK higher education institutions have progressively incorporated 'internationalisation at home' practices. Since one of the key purposes of 'internationalisation at home' is to make 'university campuses more inclusive, serving an increasingly diverse student and staff body' (Harrison and Peacock, 2010, p. 878) activities include: drawing on the presence of international students to provide alternative perspectives; incorporating international or global themes within the curriculum; developing a sense of global citizenship among both students and staff; and developing intercultural communication skills via pedagogic practice or 'exposure' to international students (Caruana and Spurling, 2007; Harrison and Peacock, 2010).

Internationalisation in its multiple guises has, however, been the subject of a level of criticism. Leask and Carroll (2011) argued that little has been done to address the persistent lack of interaction between domestic and international students; whilst Da Vita (2007, p. 165) has commented that 'the ideal of transforming a culturally diverse student population into a valued resource for activating processes of international connectivity, social cohesion and intercultural learning is still very much that, an ideal'. In addition, although the majority of UK higher education institutions, in principle, now espouse the idea of an intercultural curriculum there are manifest difficulties with attempting to implement this in practice since there may be no clear vision or understanding of what an 'intercultural curriculum' should look like and how students might be assessed (Dunne, 2011). What is missing from such debates about inclusivity, cultural diversity, inter-cultural communication and the development of the inter-cultural curriculum, however, is a disaggregation of the concept of 'culture' and a lack of debate over those aspects of students' cultures that should be recognised and valorised or may, legitimately, be overlooked or disregarded on campus.

Disaggregating culture

Hofstede (2011, p. 1) defined culture as 'the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others ... Societal cultures reside in (often unconscious) values, in the sense of broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others'. These values, which act as 'guiding principles' for life (Schwartz, 1992, 1994), in turn create a set of shared meanings that enable people to communicate with each other. Such meaning-making is produced and shared in various interconnected ways, including through social interactions, in particular, via language; through everyday rituals and practices; through the telling of stories; and through the maintenance and adherence to rules and conventions (Hall, 1997, p. 22). For Hall, therefore, 'to belong to a culture is to belong to roughly the same conceptual and linguistic universe'. Culture is not, therefore, genetically inherited but is a 'particular way of life' (Williams, 1998, p. 48), always shared by members of a society. Cultural practices include the ways in which families are formed and lived, the social organisations that individuals and groups participate in and the language and communication devices they use. These in turn are informed by gender, race or ethnic heritage, religion, social class, family and social relationships amongst others (Hall, 1997; Hofstede, 2011).

Culture is an attribute of individuals, groups, organisations, communities and nations; and a single person can belong to a multiplicity of cultures. Within much of the internationalisation literature, however, researchers are curiously silent about what comprises 'culture', other than that it is something generically 'possessed' by home or international students (Gopal, 2011; Volet and Ang, 2012), such as language or global perspectives, which can be positively drawn on to enhance and develop cross-cultural skills and provide opportunities for incorporating new perspectives and understanding into higher education. However, whilst religion plays a large part in

forming culture and informing cultural practices, religion, as an aspect of culture, is rarely valorised on the UK university campus. Rather where religion is recognised at all, religious discourses and debates focus, in the main, on dealing with extremism on campus (DIUS, 2008; Home Office, 2011) and the potential threat to the social and moral order by Muslim fundamentalism in particular (Salgado-Pottier, 2008).

Religion on campus

Although higher education today is not a wholly secular institution (Gilliat-Ray, 2000; Gelot, 2009; Stevenson, 2013), science and the secular dominate on the contemporary UK campus and higher education institutions are regarded as secular within both prevailing academic and governmental discourses (Stevenson, 2013). Indeed there is an overwhelming academic commitment to the secularity of higher education. Some academics, for example, claim that religion not only subjugates women but works against the free exercise of thought and thus the suppression of human liberty (Elliott, 2008) with others claiming that religious authority and ideas ought to be rejected outright as a basis for society (Reber, 2006).

It is perhaps not unsurprising, therefore, that whilst debates around cultural diversity and internationalisation have proliferated over the last decade, there has been a lack of engagement by academics and policy makers with religious diversity on campus and the role of religion in internationalising higher education. Furthermore, at the same time as policy and practices designed to enhance internationalisation have flourished, religious discrimination, harassment and intolerance has also increased on the higher education campus (ECU, 2011; NUS 2011).

Religious intolerance on campus

There is a scarcity of academic literature (Stevenson, 2012) exploring the experiences of religious students, particularly in the face of contemporary debates about the role of universities in enhancing religious tolerance and the heightened interest, particularly post-11 September 2001 and 7 July 2005 (the terrorist attacks in New York and London), in the growth of extremism on campus (Universities UK, 2005, 2011; Home Office, 2011). This is not just true of the equality and diversity literature but also that relating to internationalisation (Stevenson, 2012). There is manifest evidence that UK home students do not always find it easy to fit in on campus (Thomas, 2012) although the reasons why students may not has focussed on issues of class, age and gender, more rarely on ethnicity, and almost never on religion (Stevenson, 2012).

There is also substantial evidence to suggest that many international students struggle to fit in on the UK campus (Leask and Carroll, 2011). However, the internationalisation literature rarely, if at all, focuses on individual aspects of social identity that might make it hard for students to fit in. Consequently, there is a dearth of studies exploring the experiences of religious students, either home or

international and the implications for internationalisation of higher education. This paper is designed to help fill this gap in the literature.

Methodology

The research was located within a post-1992 university that has a strong commitment to equity, inclusion and widening participation and to celebrating diversity. However, although the institution's equality and diversity policy acknowledges that religion and belief are protected characteristics, it makes no mention of the needs of such students. There are, however, two prayer rooms and an active chaplaincy, as well as diverse student societies representing religious groups, though none supporting humanists or atheists. At the time of the research the institution also described itself as 'a university ... where an international, multicultural ethos is pervasive throughout our scholarship, curriculum ... at home and overseas' (unreferenced for anonymity) and had a comprehensive internationalisation policy that claimed that 'Internationalisation is more about a transformation of mind than the movement of bodies'. Amongst other areas, the aims of the internationalisation policy, were to: **1.** Ensure that an international and multicultural ethos is pervasive throughout our work and across all our study programmes **2.** Ensure meaningful cross-cultural engagement for all students wherever they are to create a sense of belonging.

The research focussed on the social and academic experiences of first-year students, known to be most at risk of struggling to 'fit in' and most likely to drop out of higher education (Thomas, 2012) and on home students, since international students are recognised as having very different experiences and support needs (Jones, 2010). All first year, full-time, home students at the research site were contacted via email. Course leaders of those courses known to have a highly diverse student body were also asked to advertise the research. In addition, contact was also made with relevant student societies such as the Christian Union, the Jewish Society and the Islamic Society. The criteria for selection were that: first, the students were first-year, home, undergraduates; second, that they were willing to commit to three interviews and, finally, that they regarded themselves as 'religious'. Being 'religious' is not an easy concept to define. Some definitions of religion exclude beliefs and practices that others would consider clearly 'religious': requiring a belief in a god responsible for the creation of the universe, for example, would exclude non-theistic religions such as Buddhism or atheistic Hinduism. It is also a multi-dimensional concept (Smart, 1993) and each dimension may have more significance to one person than another. Therefore, the students in this study were asked simply to self-declare as religious. However, recognising the need to have some form of definitional framework, all publicity and information material stated that: Religious refers to both having a faith and undertaking some form of action related to that faith. The term 'religious students' is used to refer to those students who self-identify as being religious. The students, therefore, self-defined as religious drawing on their own

definitions such as affiliation to a place of worship, conforming to specific tenets or practices of a religion or simply believing in a god.

Twenty two students made contact, of whom 15 fully met the criteria. The students who were not selected either did not meet the criteria or did not get back in touch once the research had been explained to them. Fifteen students were interviewed up to three times: in the middle of the first semester (late October–late November) and the middle of the second semester (late March–late April) of their first year and in the middle of the first semester of their second year. Interview three was conducted in the students' second year in part to determine whether they had 'made it' through their first year or had withdrawn and also because it provided an opportunity for the students to reflect back on their experiences. However, only 41 interviews were conducted. One student had left the university after just one interview, another at the end of his first year after two interviews and one was not contactable for the third interview. Each interview lasted between forty and ninety minutes, with the average being just over an hour, and were recorded and fully transcribed. The students were offered a choice of venue in which the interviews could take place. Both Jewish students chose to have all their interviews in their Jewish hall of residence; the remaining students were interviewed either in a meeting room at the university, in the library or in the canteen.

Individual narrative interviews were used to collect the data in order to 'gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena' (Kvale, 1983, p. 174). The interviews flowed loosely in the form of a research conversation, with the focus on 'episodic', rather than 'whole life', interviews (Harding, 2006). This approach was designed to elicit descriptions of particular episodes or stories in the students' daily lives, offering an insight into their everyday experiences and how they were making sense of both their experiences and their wider environment (Flick, 2000). The interviews, therefore, started with questions that would draw out students' descriptions of *what* was happening in their lives, before moving on to questions that might help develop an understanding of *why* things were happening.

The first interview asked the students to describe their journey into higher education; their first few weeks at university concentrating on both the positive and the negative; the people that had become important to them and whether this had arisen by choice or by circumstance; how they were 'fitting in' and how has this may have come about; and what, if anything, had affected their ability to participate in curricular or extra-curricular activities or other aspects of university life. In interviews two and three similar questions were asked but with the timeframes of the questions changed, for example asking about the first semester, or first year rather than the first few weeks. In these interviews specific questions were also asked of particular students following up themes or events that had arisen during the previous interview(s). Rather than attempting to triangulate or 'cross-check' these stories, the stories were taken in good faith and although the students were offered the opportunity to review

their stories, only one student took up this offer and made no changes. The interviews were not verified in any other way.

Wider findings are reported elsewhere (Stevenson, 2012, 2013). For this paper the transcripts were specifically analysed to explore whether the two key aims of the research institution's internationalisation policy were being met (from the perspective of the students), that is, how and in which ways (if at all) were the students involved in 'meaningful cross-cultural engagement' and the extent to which they considered that a 'multicultural ethos [was] pervasive' throughout the university. The students' transcripts were, therefore, combed through to identify broad themes and more specific stories relating to these specific areas.

Findings

The analysis revealed that rather than experiencing a positive multicultural environment with meaningful cross-cultural engagement, the students believe that they were 'othered' because of their religious differences and, as a consequence, were excluded and marginalised from their peers and from the campus.

Cross-cultural engagement or 'othering' through religious difference?

'Othering' is the process through which a dominant group defines into existence a subordinate group (Barter-Godfrey and Taket, 2009). Individuals (or groups) can be 'othered', or can be 'otherers', based on, for example, race or gender and religion. As with gender or race, religion acts as an identity marker, both in affirming the self and in marking the differentiation of the outsider (Mitchell, 2005). Most of the students in this study believed that they were 'othered' on campus predominantly, though not exclusively, because of their religious identity, through the processes of stereotyping and, what they perceived to be, discrimination.

The Christian students all complained that they were stereotyped by their fellow students as being 'sexless' or 'virgins', 'lacking a sense of fun'. Simon, an eighteen year old, White, Christian, for example, described how: 'lots of the other students I've met make fun of Christianity ... that we [Christians] are all humourless and don't know how to have fun and are dull, dull, dull'. Ruth described the ways in which she is stereotyped by her student peers 'because I'm Christian and wear a cross and go to Church it's like I must also be a prude and have no sense of humour'. Gary observed that 'students think "many Christians, well they're geeks" and lots of

students think "what no sex before marriage?". ... lots of people have stereotypes about Christianity'.

The stereotyping of the Muslim students by other students, however, was more invidious in that it rested on public representations in the media, particularly those relating to Islamic terrorism and extremism. Aisha, expressed her anger that her peers regarded the headscarf as a symbol of 'male oppression' without ever asking why she wore it and whether she had a choice; Imran and El-Feda both complained about the casual ways in which conversations about male Muslims on campus were interchanged with conversations about terrorism 'as if it is not possible to be Muslim without being a terrorist' (El-Feda). Each of these students complained that they were positioned as the 'other' as a consequence of such stereotyping and specifically because they were religious. However, the 'othering' experienced by these students was not simply the result of thoughtless or casual remarks expressed by individuals; rather, the students believed that such casual intolerance and derogatory comments were able to thrive in a climate within which they remained unchallenged on campus. This, the students argued, was a consequence of the institution failing to recognise the legitimacy of their religion and of their religious cultural identity.

Davina, an eighteen-year-old, Jewish woman, for example, complained furiously about not being given time off for religious festivals as they fell during the normal teaching timetable. Tony (Christian) described at length how his complaints to the accommodation office about his flatmates smoking, getting drunk and bringing girls back to the flat were simply ignored. Simon (Christian) considered that the university's refusal to allow him to put up Christian Union posters discriminated against his right to exercise religious freedom. Simon was particularly dismissive of the rationale given to him for not being allowed to put up his posters: that other students might find them offensive. Indeed, whilst such explanations indicate the institutions' attempts to balance the needs of different groups of students, this is not how the religious students regarded them. Rather, they believed that not only was their (perceived) discrimination being ignored or disregarded but they also believed that the institution, through its refusal to acknowledge religion on campus, was colluding in their 'othering'. In addition, several of the students were also highly critical of what they saw as the institution being more accommodating of some religions than others. Dinah (Jewish), for example, was condemnatory of what she saw as preferential treatment of the Palestinian Society compared to the Jewish Society, whilst Tony believed that Muslim students struggling with their flatmates would be treated more sympathetically than he was as a Christian student. Accordingly, the Jewish and Christian students believed that the Muslim students were receiving preferential treatment, whilst the Muslim students considered that they were the most 'othered' of all.

A pervasive multicultural ethos?

Only one of the students, Gary, a Christian man, felt fully included in the university despite being openly religious. Sean and Mandy, both older Christian students, made a deliberate decision to 'pass' as nonreligious, recognising that being a mature student at university made them 'different enough' without introducing any other form of difference and that being religious in a predominantly secular environment had the potential to 'other' them even further. As Mandy explained: I'm middle-aged, divorced, twice, got four children ... depression ... like it's how many more ways do you want to stand out Mandy ... so I've just kept it quiet. I don't go there ... I just hope they don't ask. Electing to pass as non-religious enabled Sean and Mandy to fit in.

The rest of the students chose to remain openly religious, or in the case of Aisha, a Muslim and Amneet a Khalsa Sikh, having no choice as they wore a headscarf and other representations of their religion. The consequence, however, was isolation and exclusion by their peers: Simon described the uneasiness of the other students in his halls of residence in the face of his devout adherence to his Christian faith, how they kept silent or did not tell him things that they were willing to tell or discuss with others, both for fear of offending him in some way and also because they believed he may not understand or accept their perspective or behaviour. Aisha and Amneet both described how they sat by themselves in classes, the exclusionary 'othering' they experienced heightened by the visibility of their 'otherness'—their clothes and their skin colour. This was particularly devastating for Amneet as she arrived at university believing that she had 'lots to offer', particularly as the course she was studying for 'talks about diversity and multiculturalism and working with children from different ethnic backgrounds'. It appears, however, that neither Amneet's peers, nor her tutors, 'accepted' the particular forms of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) that she brought with her and that, theoretically, should have provided exactly those opportunities for the development of intercultural perspectives and understanding that underpinned the institution's internationalisation strategy.

Imran was also frustrated by his failure to integrate with students from other cultural backgrounds. He had studied at a multicultural UK further education college, where he had made friends with people from many different races and religions and had expected that it would be the same at university. He described the way in which a group of his peers stopped talking when he sat down to join them in the refectory and complained that: It's just becoming so clear that religion stands in the way of me making friends with other people. Like on one level you are friends but it's not really friendship, not like I would like. But they don't want to cross a line that they seem to have drawn.

As a consequence of their 'othering' and exclusion, many of the students ended up avoiding the university and, at its worst, walking away from confrontation or at its 'best' invisibility. Tony and Simon eventually socialised almost exclusively off-campus, through their respective churches, only coming in to the university to attend lectures. Aisha chose to socialise with her former school friends or at the city's other university that provided significantly more non-alcohol related opportunities. She

believed strongly that 'the university has let me down'. Imran also stopped trying to make new friends and within a few months was socialising only with other Muslims, commenting that: In the end you just want to be with people who accept you for what you are, so that you don't have to pretend any more. I haven't been through everything I've been through just to end up being someone else than who I really am. For Amneet the consequences of being excluded were significant enough for her to leave the university at the end of her first semester, while Imran eventually left at the end of his first year.

Summary: meeting the aims of the internationalisation strategy?

The two key aims of the research institution's internationalisation strategy were to ensure 'an international and multicultural ethos' and 'meaningful cross-cultural engagement for all students to create a sense of belonging'. The experiences of the students highlighted in this paper, however, indicate that, from their perspective, the institution had not achieved either aim; rather the lack of recognition of religion and the prevailing secularism on campus meant that they did not consider that they were participating in an institution with a truly multicultural ethos. In addition, very few of the students found meaningful cross-cultural engagement: instead the majority, either through choice or through enforced exclusion, studied or socialised almost exclusively with 'others like them'.

Leask and Carroll (2011, p. 647) argue that 'there is evidence of too much emphasis on "wishing and hoping" that benefits will flow from cultural diversity on campus and not enough emphasis on strategic and informed intervention to improve inclusion and engagement'. This is echoed by the findings of this research. Imran, for example, was particularly critical that there was little room for dialogue and discussion of race and religion across the university; Aisha complained that the university did little to build cross-cultural relationships between students. However, what is more concerning than any lack of action or level of passivity is that many of these students faced what they regarded to be discrimination and 'othering' and believed that this was not being addressed by the institution. Indeed they felt that the institution was guilty of condoning their 'othering' and exclusion through a policy of inactivity. Their experiences echo research by Leask and Carroll (2011, p. 648) who also found that those 'perceived as belonging to cultural and linguistic minorities are locked into the status of 'outsider', either unwilling or unable to engage with the dominant majority'. For these students, the aims of the institution's internationalisation policy had failed.

Implications for policy and practice in internationalisation

This research was limited in that it involved only a small number of students studying at just one university. As the number of students who participated in this study was so small, the analysis did not draw attention to any possible link between affiliation to a specific religious group and the ways in which the students responded to stereotyping or discrimination. This area warrants further research. In addition,

although some of the students who participated in the research indicated a level of intolerance to other religions the research did not specifically set out to explore cross-religious views. Further research exploring cross-religious views and toleration may also have implications for internationalisation policy and practice. Moreover, the institution in which this research took place may, of course, be quite different to other universities. It would expand and broaden the implications of this study if the results were compared with the experiences of students at UK universities with religious foundations, such as York St John, or Oxford or Cambridge, as well as with research undertaken in countries in which religion and state are more explicitly combined, or in those universities that are explicitly religious. Nonetheless the research does highlight a need for universities, in developing internationalisation strategies, to take a more nuanced account of the cultural backgrounds of their students, including their religious affiliation. The stories told by these students throw doubt on whether this is happening.

There is a legal requirement (Equality Act, 2010) for UK higher education institutions to act to ensure that students, among other groups, do not experience either direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of one or more protected characteristics. These protected characteristics include religion and belief and relate to any religion, any religious or philosophical belief, or a lack of any such religion or belief. Whether the specific practices that the students in this study considered to be discriminatory would be defined as such in a court of law is debateable. Nevertheless, institutions may wish to survey their own religious student body to consider whether there are policies or practices that might be discriminatory and intervene as appropriate. This may also help to foster an environment within which religious students feel able to remain on campus and thus enhance student retention. There is, therefore, also a business case for higher education institutions to meet the needs of religious students, not only in relation to retention but also because inclusive institutions may well be better recruiters of students (Weller, 2010). This is particularly important as UK universities increasingly face competition from private universities in the UK or overseas universities delivering higher education in English.

Finally, there is a case for ensuring that religion is recognised within debates about internationalisation if universities are to act as social milieu within which *all* students can develop the global, intercultural perspectives needed to live and work as 'global citizens'. Recognising, and valorising, religion on campus may afford institutions greater opportunities for inter-cultural dialogue, as well as the chance to draw on alternative perspectives, and thus develop a greater sense of global citizenship amongst both staff and students (Caruana and Spurling, 2007). Consequently, recognising religion on campus may serve to further meet the aims of the internationalisation agenda more broadly and, for this specific research site, ensure a more pervasive multicultural ethos and greater cross-cultural engagement for all students.

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