

Global Citizenship Education and Cultural Exchange – A Postcolonial Reading on an International Higher Education Partnership

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This paper explores the understanding of global citizenship education and cultural exchange in the context of international cooperation in higher education. The current agendas for global citizenship education in higher education have arisen from the increased requests for higher education institutions to internationalise their activities. In this paper, I approach global citizenship education from the perspective of postcolonial critique by exploring the notion of culture with knowledge, development and economics in one North-South-South network. I aim to unravel the prevalent colonising practices, and to discuss how to move towards more ethical relationships in international collaborations.

Keywords: higher education, global citizenship education, culture, postcolonialism

Introduction

"The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story." - Chimamanda Adichie

In the above quotation Adichie describes the danger of a single story. The paper at hand also addresses this danger in a context of international cooperation in higher education. I aim to consider the pitfalls of a single story, which work against enhancing difference, social justice and equality. I try to make the pitfalls explicit, and to analyse and discuss their meaning and impact on the international collaboration in higher education.

This paper explores global citizenship education (GCE) in the context of higher education from a postcolonial perspective. The object of my study is one North-South-South¹ (NSS) network, coordinated by a Finnish art university and including ten partners from Africa, Middle East and

¹ The network at hand is part of the NSS Higher Education Institution Network Programme coordinated by CIMO. CIMO is the Finnish agency for international mobility. It is an expert organisation providing services on international mobility and co-operation. As an agency of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, it promotes internationalisation in a variety of ways. In CIMO's webpage the programme is described as following: "The programme opens up opportunities for cooperation between higher education institutions in Finland and developing countries. The main focus is on reciprocal student and teacher exchange. The purpose of the programme is to enhance human capacity in all participating countries through interaction and mobility. The aim is also to generate and disseminate knowledge and to create sustainable partnerships between higher education institutions in Finland and in the partner countries. The focus is especially on the enhancement of higher education in partner countries". (CIMO webpage)

Asia². My aim is to examine what kind of understanding of global citizenship education is constructed in the network. The paper at hand is based on my master's thesis in which I did a larger research on the topic. My argument is that the current NSS cooperation does not support the critical and ethical engagement of the North³ towards the South or the Other, and therefore is reproducing the colonial patterns of inequalities.

For the purposes of this paper, I have chosen to approach the question of global citizenship education through the concept of culture due to three reasons. Firstly, since GCE is inherently a practice that goes beyond the national perspective, it includes a stance towards culture and cultures. Secondly, I use the concept of culture, and the meanings and interpretations given to it as a unit of analysis to explore how culture is positioned and articulated in the discursive field of knowledge and development in the collaboration to draw an understanding of GCE in the network. Thirdly, since the participating institutions are all art universities (including music, theatre and dance education), the role of culture and arts in the collaboration is emphasised. The understanding of culture and cultural in this paper goes beyond the conceptualisations of culture as civilizational project (see Robertson & Dale 2015, p. 154), cultural theory and the German concept of Bildung (see Grillo 2003; Williams 1983; Bleicher 2006). I rather understand culture as 1) a process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development, 2) a particular way of life of a people, a period, a group, or a humanity in general, and 3) works and practices of intellectual and artistic activity including, for example, music and education. (Williams 1983, p. 90.) These varied understandings of culture emerge from the data and the postcolonial critique of GCE presented later in the paper. Throughout the paper, it is the context that defines in which meaning the concept of culture is used. All these three meanings are produced in a process defined by Bhabha (1994, p. 172) as "an uneven, incomplete production of meaning and value, often composed of incommensurable demands and practices, produced in the act of social survival".

² For research ethical reason I decided to keep the network and the partner universities anonymous throughout the study.

³ In this study, the terms North and South are used when referred to the global North and South. I am using these terms for two reasons. Firstly, the data shows this vocabulary– the analysed documents themselves use the words North and South. Secondly, these terms are used in postcolonial literature. Generally, the North corresponds to the 'Western world' (North America, Western Europe and some parts of Asia) that takes the teleological project of Western/Enlightenment humanism and rationality for granted, which forms the basis of dominant Western epistemologies. The South refers to the Central and Latin America, Africa, and most of Asia where other epistemologies exist and the Western rationality is not the conventional system. (See e.g. Andreotti 2011 and Gandhi 1998.)

Global citizenship education and its agendas

The wider background for my research lies in the recent and current developments of higher education, in which, according to a number of researchers, globalisation plays a big role (see e.g. Rizvi 2014; Ball, Goodson & Maguire 2007; Jokila, Kallio & Rinne 2015; Andreotti 2011). It is acknowledged in the national strategies as well as in higher education institutions how they are influenced by the global flows. The interdependence of the world and people and the accelerating competition in the 'knowledge economy' affect the ways in which institutions and states gain advantage or are ranked (Britez & Peters 2010, p. 206). This neoliberal environment has resulted in a greater dependency between the states and higher education, in which higher education institutions are expected to contribute to the competitiveness in the global markets (Rizvi & Lingard 2010). Internationalisation of higher education has been one of the most visible outcomes of the global flows in higher education in the last three decades (Knight 2012).

The concepts of global education and GCE have emerged as a result of globalisation and internationalisation of higher education, and the challenges these set for citizenship education. Global interconnectedness, global responsibility and an understanding of communities, states and nations call for a type of citizenship education that aims to move beyond the national perspectives (Pashby 2012; Camicia & Franklin 2011; Mannion et al. 2011). This matter has increased in importance over the past decades, mainly in Western industrialised countries that have called for a development of a more global orientation in pedagogy and curriculum in order to equip students with intercultural skills, to make them more aware of and engaged with global issues and phenomena (Mannion, Biesta, Priestley & Ross 2011, p. 443), and to promote social cohesion and tolerance at a local, national and international level (Marshall 2009, p. 248). This has resulted in a number of approaches to GCE. Each approach has an agenda of its own, with a different emphasis on the cultural, social, economical and political implications of such education. This paper approaches GCE from the perspective of postcolonial critique, addressing the social, cultural, economical and political aspects of GCE.

Over the last decades, the agendas for GCE have arisen from a number of various organisations - from inter-governmental bodies, national governments, NGOs, the media and the voluntary and business sectors. These organisations have different interests including sustainability, intercultural understanding, economic integration, skills and knowledge for the global economy, human rights

and social justice and equality. (Marshall 2011, p. 412.) In the global citizenship literature, there seems to be an increasing concern about the dominance of the economic instrumentalist agenda in education policies (see Marshall 2009, 2011; Khoo 2011; Mannion et al. 2011; Pashby 2012). For example, according to Marshall (2011) in GCE the economic agenda is to prepare students for the competitive 'knowledge economy'. Similarly, Mannion et al. (2011, p. 453) argue that the focus on the 'responsible citizen' is mainly defined in official curricular documents in cultural and economic terms and, there is a danger to obscure the justice-oriented citizen.

Marshall (2011, p. 413) highlights that it is important and necessary in conceptualising and researching GCE to acknowledge that the numerous interests with different purposes and agendas presented by various organisations need to be contextualised "historically, politically culturally and geographically - and situated among wider instrumentalist agendas". Behind the contextualisation is the recognition that education in general, as well as citizenship education is always bound to politics, and thus, "citizenship education is connected to a political economy of social, cultural and economic relations related to sometimes competing visions of community" (Camicia and Franklin 2011, p. 312). The conceptualisation and the pedagogy of GCE are then heavily influenced by the values, purposes and ideology behind its agenda. The postcolonial approach to GCE acknowledges these influences and aims to make explicit the historical and political roots of power and privilege.

Postcolonial critique on global citizenship education

As education institutions are the arenas for citizenship education, it is crucial to notice how schooling and education are still penetrated by the colonial legacy (Pashby 2012, 9). According to Stein and Andreotti (2015), the aftermath of European modernity and colonialism still enables the continuation of historically uneven power relations, mainly in the form of West's on-going economic prosperity, political influence and claims to universalism. In the context of 'new imperialism', Pashby (2012, p. 15) advocates for an agenda for GCE that unravels the colonial power imbalances and selection and content of global issues in terms of citizenship education. This agenda is best understood by following the distinction between 'soft vs. critical' GCE (Andreotti 2006). The biggest difference between these two approaches is that the critical one includes notions of power, voice and difference in order to build an ethical relationship towards the Other (ibid). By ignoring the analysis of power relations and knowledge construction,

educational practices often unintentionally reproduce ethnocentric and paternalistic approaches that thrive on patronising and salvation of the Other (Andreotti & Souza 2012, p. 1).

The critical approach is based on postcolonial theory that explores economic and cultural processes to examine "how cultural/epistemological assumption frame relationships and injustices" (Andreotti 2011, p. 13). Postcolonial theory is politically motivated, since it analyses ways to question the politically, economically and culturally unequalising structures that have been formed during the era of colonialism and imperialism, and are still prevalent (Kuortti, 2007, p.12). Therefore, the critical understanding of GCE seeks to avoid an approach that tends to tokenise and exoticise foreign places and people (Pashby 2012, p. 9). Using the postcolonial 'lenses' in researching GCE enables us to unpack the Western conceptualisation of knowledge, rationality and progress, and reminds us that it is only one way to construct the world (Andreotti & Souza 2012, p. 2). The essential concepts in the critical approach are epistemic violence, cultural supremacy, sanctioned ignorance and civilising mission. These depict the Eurocentrism and Western centrism towards knowledge, development and culture.

Cultural supremacy describes the result of a process where one's own values, knowledge and rationality are considered superior to those of others. Said (1978) has pointed out that in the core of this process is the creation of stereotypes and knowledge about the Orient through representations. This knowledge is used to determine how the Orient should be viewed and controlled, and also how it results in ways of knowing, studying, believing and writing (Andreotti 2011a, p. 19-20). Cultural supremacy is based on the superiority of Western modernity and Enlightenment (Gandhi 1998, p. 29), in which the core is the all knowing, self-sufficient Cartesian subject who projects his knowledge as unequivocal and universal (Andreotti 2011, p. 2). Cartesian subject sees Otherness as dangerous and deviant and endeavours to repress symptoms of cultural alterity (Gandhi 1998, p. 40). It is about freezing the cultural 'Otherness' and celebrating with it (Hirsiho 2007, p. 234).

Cultural supremacy results in a unilateral perspective towards the world. Spivak (1990) talks about cultural imperialism as 'wording of the West as world', in which strong separation is constructed between the 'Third World' and the 'First World' that naturalises the place and definition of the 'Third World', and, in turn, obscures the construction and naturalisation of Western dominance and supremacy (Andreotti 2007, p. 69). Spivak (1990) calls this process as 'epistemic violence' of

imperialism. In the process of naturalisation, the history of imperialism and the unequal balance of power are denied. Thus, colonialism is either ignored or placed in the past, and thought to have zero effect on the construction of the present situation (Andreotti 2006, p. 44). The consequence is, as Spivak (1988) puts it, 'sanctioned ignorance' of the role of colonialism in the creation and maintenance of the wealth of the 'First World'.

The perception of 'First World' people that they live in the centre of the world, and that they have the responsibility to help the rest, repeats the epistemic violence of colonialism and justifies the project of development of the Other as a 'civilising mission' (Spivak 1988). It is based on a stereotype of the colonised as incapable of self-governing and being independent. The assumption behind it is that the 'problem' the 'Third World' countries have is a 'lack' of features that the 'First World' countries have. These features include e.g. education, democracy, scientific knowledge, technology, a more 'civilised' culture and universally 'correct' values. Therefore, the 'First World' is responsible for the 'Third World' to 'help them out' to civilise, educate, modernise and develop the Other. (Andreotti 2011, p. 22.) However, Spivak (1998) points out that the 'civilising mission' may end up silencing the subaltern, since there is a difference to talk *for* someone than *with* someone. Spivak (2004) refers to the relational stance as an ethical responsibility towards the Other. It means to "unlearn one's privilege, to establish an ethical relationship to difference and to learn to learn from below" (Andreotti 2007, p. 69).

Cultural supremacy, epistemic violence, sanctioned ignorance and civilising mission have an impact on how the notion of culture is understood. The static vs. hybrid approaches to culture capture the difference between the postcolonial and Eurocentric understanding of it. Bhabha (1994) sees culture as hybrid, meaning that it "is not something static or essentialist – it's hybrid, dynamic, productive - not a noun but a verb" (Andreotti 2011, p. 29). He questions the 'authenticity' of cultures, since cultures are born and produced in hybrid environments. Thus, the 'authentic representations' is to be questioned as no representation can exist in isolation from its cultural or ideological categories and, in addition, all systems of representation are overlapped in other systems of representation (Andreotti 2011, p. 30). Said (1978) also emphasises the danger of the Eurocentric notion of culture. The whole perception of the exotic Orient is based on the conceptualisation of culture as static, distinct, and fully knowable. According to Wright (2012, p. 56), it follows that cultures are segregated into taxonomies, and that they can be praised through the rhetoric of 'preservation', 'protection' and 'heritage'.

Bhabha's distinction between cultural diversity and cultural difference further explains the static versus hybrid notions of culture. By 'cultural difference' he refers to the hybrid constructions of cultures and the nonessential relation to other cultures. 'Cultural diversity', on the other hand, refers to the coexistence of diverse cultures that are separated from other cultures, each of them existing in a vacuum. Thus, each culture "sees itself as an essential, authentic, pure whole with a fixed origin totally unrelated to and with the other cultures which are co-present in the presumed 'diversity'" (Andreotti 2011, p. 32). By turning the attention towards the cultural difference instead of cultural diversity, there is an opportunity to "open the way to conceptualising an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity" (Bhabha 1994, p. 38).

Using the postcolonial 'lenses' in researching GCE "informs and structures an analysis of knowledge production and power relations that attempt to identify ethnocentric, paternalistic, depoliticised, ahistorical, and hegemonic tendencies (or assumptions of cultural supremacy) and their implications in the discursive production of self and Other in institutionalised discourses" (Andreotti 2011, 58). This is exactly what I endeavour to do in this research. The research data represents the GCE agenda applied to Finnish higher education by the national policies⁴, therefore, by analysing the particular NSS network and the forms of intercultural collaboration taking place in it, provides me a fertile ground to explore whether a single story dominates the collaboration or if there is room for the coexistence of multiple stories. As the notion of culture is central in postcolonial theory, I have chosen to scrutinise the notion of culture and its relationship to knowledge, development and economics through the postcolonial 'lenses' in order to contribute to the discussion of the current developments of GCE.

Data and method

The analysed data consists of two documents written by the coordinator university to the international mobility agency in Finland, which supplied the funding for the network. The documents used are application document and final report. I refer to the documents by using a letter and number combination. D1 refers to the application document and D2 to the final report. I

⁴ In terms of global citizenship education and higher education, a special focus has been paid to international cooperation in Finnish higher education policies. In the "Strategy for the Internationalisation of the Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009-2015", NSS cooperation is considered to be one of the main contributors to global citizenship education. (See MEdu 2009.)

have also used some other documents for background information and to draw the big picture of the network and its activities. Since the two documents are written for the funding agency, the nature of the documents is two-fold. On one hand, the content is written to fill the objectives of the funder, i.e. CIMO as a representative of the ministry of education, and on the other hand, it also expresses the interests, ideas and aims of the network and its participants. It is in place to emphasise that I am not exploring the experiences of the tuition and the activities within the network, hence, I am not making any conclusions about how individuals might understand, experience, practice or have opinions about the matters I am exploring. There might be great differences between the lived and experienced activities, and the written word in the documents that I am analysing.

The research is based on a poststructural paradigm, i.e. I see discourses as representations of reality and by examining text and language I am able to deconstruct the textual representations of the world (Andreotti 2010; Hatch 2002). I use critical discourse analysis and postcolonial reading⁵ in analysing the data to deconstruct and reconstruct the representations of the South and the North and to examine the definitions and conceptualisations of culture, development and knowledge produced in the documents. In line with colonial discourse studies, I am looking at how these representations and conceptualisations contribute to producing/reproducing injustices and inequalities (Andreotti 2011, p. 85). Therefore, the discourse formations are always linked to politics and to the exercise of power (Gandhi 1998, p. 77). By unravelling the representations and practices of Othering, I will scrutinise the local and global realities of the South and the North and how these impact on the transcultural collaboration. It enables me to examine if inequalities between the North and the South are maintained, and how these contribute to the understanding of global citizenship education.

The analysis was a dialogue between the theory and the data during which my postcolonial lenses got stronger. Vanessa Andreotti is one of the leading researchers of the critical GCE, therefore, the discussion leans on many parts to her research and publications. Especially helpful in the analysis

⁵ Discourse analysis is based on the idea of social constructionism, in which language has consequences on social interaction and on the structures of society, i.e. language and the ways people perceive reality is socially constructed. Therefore, discourse analysis unpacks the production of social reality, and describes how discursive struggle constructs this reality so that it appears natural and neutral. (Jokinen, Juhila & Suoninen 1993; Rear and Jones 2013; Phillips & Hardy 2002.) Critical and postcolonial discourse analysis highlights the historically embedded ways to describe and make meaning for practices, phenomena and people from a particular perspective in a particular way. (Pietikäinen & Mäntynen 2009; Andreotti 2011; Gandhi 1998.)

was the HEADS UP⁶ framework created by Andreotti (2012). It helped me to unravel the colonialist discourses and representations and to connect them to the notions of culture, knowledge and development. As this study is theory driven, I will present analysis and discussion as intertwined processes where data and interpretation go hand-in-hand.

I want to adduce that this research is also only one discursive orientation that I have constructed of the phenomenon of the subject of my study. It is a story based on my interpretations of the documents, therefore, I am not aiming to make a universal 'truth' explicit. If someone else had carried out this study, there would be another story. The data I have used is not a transparent evidence of some objective reality, instead, it constructs the reality and my scrutiny is trying to reveal the ways in which sense is being made (see Davies 2004, p. 4). I also want to identify my position in this research as a privileged white woman from the North. I am not able to step outside my context, and it is not possible for me to examine the scope of study objectively at any level. As Jefferess (2012, p. 28) has said, I am not situated "outside the cultural politics of benevolence I critique".

From analysis to discussion

"Culture has the ability to empower, mobilise, open minds and communicate. Art can be the infrastructure that supports alternatives. It can challenge people to see things in a new way. Artists are often deeply involved in many movements, struggles, revolutions and change processes" (D1, p.13).

This quotation from one of the analysed documents provides a fresh, hopeful and idealistic description of culture, art and artist. It states the foundation and wider aims for the collaboration. Keeping this in mind, in the following sections I will explore the stories embedded in the representations of the Northern and the Southern cultures and how these are used to define knowledge, development and economics. All these contribute to the understanding of global citizenship education in this particular network.

⁶ HEADS UP is a framework (an acronym of the first letters) that gathers the most common problems often neglected in global educational initiatives addressing social justice and equality. It provides questions for **H**egemony, **E**thnocentrism, **A**historicism, **D**epoliticisation, **S**alvationism, **U**n-complicated solutions and **P**aternalism.

Knowledge for you and experiences for us

The documents highlight mutual cultural exchange as a starting point for collaboration: *"Mutual cultural exchange, which results in the capacity building of local developing cultures"* (D1, p.4). This provokes a question of the content of the cultural exchange. There seems to be a difference between the content of the cultural exchange depending on the receiver and the provider and to whom it refers, the North or the South. As can be seen from the following examples, what the South has to offer for the North is described as exotic traditional and ritual experiences whereas the North can provide expertise in terms of tuition.

"The theatre education on university level is very young in Mozambique. The teachers do not have formal theatre education themselves and they need support in pedagogical aspects, self-confidence in teaching situations and questions of documentation and research. [...] [Finland] has a lot to learn from [Mozambique] as well: we are very interested in the ritualistic African theatre and dance as well as African theatre and dance history and traditions" (D1, p.2).

"The partner schools' in Africa and Asia can benefit from the Finnish experience of tuition in music, dance and theatre. [...] [Finland] offers education in these fields and can offer expertise for partners" (D1, p.13)

The Southern partners are represented as lacking certain things that the North has (formal education, pedagogy, self-confidence) whereas the North is interested in ritualistic African theatre and dance as well as African theatre and dance history and traditions. As a result, the Mozambican teachers are depicted as in need of knowledge and expertise what the Finnish teachers can provide, while the Finnish teachers are interested in the exotic content of the African culture.

Also, the mutual benefit varies in terms of content and importance, since it is stated that *"the greatest aim being for real fundamental development to occur there" [in the South]* (D1, p.11). In order to execute the *real fundamental development*, the cultural exchange *"allows us in the North to gain vastly useful knowledge in terms of the South"* (D1, p.11). Therefore, *"these activities enhance the ability to understand the African and Asian culture and tradition, which can later lead into new projects with goals for development"* (D1, p. 13). This suggests that the development in the South is dependent on the exotic cultural experiences of the North and the help of North in general. Behind this discourse is a strong taste of paternal benevolence, which retains the Other

as an object of benevolence (Jefferess 2008, p. 28), hence, the Other is subordinated to the salvation of the North. Jefferess (2008, p. 32) points out that this kind of 'helping' easily "serves to mask the structural violence of contemporary global relations", and, as a result, reproduction of cultural supremacy is taking place and the reinforcement of colonial assumptions and relations.

What is interesting is that there is not only a difference in the content of the exchange, in addition, they are also valued differently. As the North is the knowing, civilised and developed, the main benefit for the North is "*mainly in cultural aspect of the exchange rather than academic outcomes*" (D2, p.3). Also, the direction of the academic knowledge is confirmed by saying that "*The academic side of the exchange has been considered notable especially in the exchanges from south to north*" (D2, p.11). The difference between the content and the value of 'the cultural' is obvious. When referring to southern culture, as seen above, features like traditional and ritualistic are articulated. It is also seen as surprising and unexpected when cooperation took place between African teachers: "*An unforeseen positive outcome was the cooperation and exchange of good practices between the African teachers*" (D2, p.8), even though one of the main aims of the whole network activities was to increase the South-South collaboration. It is paradoxical to set an aim for the activity and then regard it as unforeseen when the goal is reached. This draws a picture of the Southern people as inferior and incapable of cooperation, and contributes to creating stereotypes about the Orientals (see Said 1978).

When referring to the North, the content of 'the cultural' is articulated as learning and academic. It reflects the northern culture as intellectual and progressive. The southern *cultural aspects* are separated from the northern *academic side*. This implies that the southern culture is placed outside the academic and intellectual and the southern cultural experience is devalued by not including it as a part of academic outcome or achievement. This demonstrates that development, and the knowledge and structures needed for it, as understood by the North, are seen as universal and a feature of a culture that is 'ahead', whereas what is described as cultural in terms of the South are mainly exoticised and traditional features suggesting a notion of a culture that is 'behind' in history (cf. Alasuutari & Andreotti 2015, p. 70). Andreotti (2011, p. 103) has also scrutinised this issue in her research. She points out that Eurocentric-universalist and hegemonic understanding of epistemology is reproduced by referring to that as 'knowledge' in contrast to the other epistemologies that are referred to as *history, traditions and heritage*. These *histories, traditions and heritages* that do not have the value of knowledge are the object of analysis for the

northern students and teachers to *develop knowledge and understanding* about the Other. Only after the North has interpreted the traditions and heritages, these can be considered as knowledge.

The North acquiring knowledge from the South to the means of development raises a question proposed by Andreotti (2015a, p. 223): "Whether knowledge is enough to change how people imagine themselves, their relationships with each other and with the world at large"? As this paper claims, the colonial legacy is apparent in the data, but it does not necessarily mean that the participants of the network are fully aware of that legacy. As Andreotti (2015a) points out, a 'constitutive disavowal' of the North being a partner in crime in the ongoing colonial harm is a difficult challenge to be addressed in international education. It is because the potential equality of the Other and the awareness of our dependency in developing and modernising them threaten our self-image as entitled to intervene in the world as 'change makers'.

Culture as a basis for development - but whose culture?

The importance to base development on local culture is emphasised in the data: "*Sustainable development is based on the cultural heritage and the set of values of the community in question*" (D1, p.3). It suggests that development should be based on the *values* and *heritage* of each society, rather than on coercive external influences. This idea is also articulated in relation to cultural diversity and cultural identity: "*The culture of a society is a basis for development. It gives the feeling of security and makes it possible for its people to express their feelings and the problems they are facing. It is therefore immensely important to respect the cultural diversity and support the activities of preserving cultural identity*" (D1, p.3). What this seems to suggest is that development requires preserving one's cultural identity, and therefore we need to respect cultural diversity in order to support the cultural activities that contribute to it. However, this aspect on culture and development is paradoxical when looking at the means of development in the network.

One of the main activities to enhance development is the dissemination activity/event, which in this network is a workshop on proposal/application writing to apply external funding. The reason for this particular dissemination activity is stated in the following: "*Southern partners lack skills involved in applying for external funding, namely PROPOSAL/APPLICATION WRITING. They are full of innovative ideas, but putting pen to paper has been a challenge for them, and thus, they have*

come to depend on Nordic efforts" (D1, p.8). As it is very clearly indicated, the problem is the lack of skills in terms of proposal/application writing. This also implies that the proposal/application writing is not challenging for everyone, only for the South, which represents the Southern people as incapable of self-governing which is used as an argument for civilising them (see Andreotti 2011). Nevertheless, it can be said that the whole practice of proposal/application writing is defined by the North as well as the rules of it. Since the South does not know how to play the game set by the North, they are described as challenged and unable to do it for themselves.

There is a paradox in the way how, on the one hand, development said to be based on the *values* and *heritage* of each society but, on the other hand, bringing one main activity for development as a ready made solution from the North. The solution for decreasing dependency of the South on the North provided here is uncomplicated and does not take into account and discuss the more complex and deeper obstacles or the political nature of the problem. This uncomplicatedness is sealed in the application by describing the link between the dissemination activity and development, and by naming the skills and resources as the problem instead of structural issues. Therefore, depoliticising the practice of dissemination activity. As a result, development is seen as something distinctly desirable, universal, worthy of pursuit, a promise for a better future, and something that the North has and the South does not. The need for change in terms of capacity building describes universal attainment of universal knowledge through universal education for universal development (Andreotti 2011, p. 93).

The goal of the activities in the network (especially the dissemination event) is to empower individuals to act according to what has been defined for them as development. This raises a question whether the North is talking *to* the South or *with* the South? As the greatest aim of the network is to actualise real fundamental development in the South "*so that all of us partners stand on a more even playing field*" (D1, p.11), reaching the *even playing field* is subjugated to the *fundamental development in the South*, which indicates that the game is played on the terms of the more powerful side, i.e. the North. This does not require the North to question its position nor to recognise its procedures and ways to behave, act and organise. It appears, as Spivak (1998) has pointed out, the North is mainly talking *to* the South, and therefore actually silencing the subaltern.

Culture and education – the servants of economy

The cultural supremacy in terms of development and knowledge, and thus, epistemology and ontology, penetrates also the idea of economics presented in the documents. It appears as neoliberal orientation, in which education is expected to contribute to the nation's economic growth (Rizvi & Lingard 2010). In the neoliberal orientation knowledge is commodified as products to be sold in the international markets, and the international rankings and branding become the cornerstones of the institutional survival (Pashby & Andreotti 2015, p. 6). In the documents, the neoliberal orientation emerges in using the cultural exchange and collaboration for the strategic positioning of the coordinating university in the international higher education market and explaining the choice of partners according to that positioning.

"[Finland] would also stand to benefit greatly via this partnership with what will be our first Asian partner. Malaysia is to function as an expert gateway to other areas in Southeast Asia, a thought echoed by the Finnish Embassy in Malaysia" (D1, p.4)

"[...Finland] sees our Malaysian partner as an opportunity to not only develop HEI music education, but also to look into wider cooperative possibilities in Asia, i.e. via export of education. Malaysia's multicultural (including the Tamil Malaysians and those who speak Chinese), well-educated and fluently English-speaking university population would most certainly play a useful role in more general Asia partnerships, especially regarding India and China" (D1, p.10).

The layout of the partnership between Finland and Malaysia represented above includes simultaneously the discourses of benevolence and competition in higher education. According to Pashby and Andreotti (2015, p. 14), "strategic targeting of certain countries for international partnerships and student recruitment (neoliberal orientation) is framed by ideas of capacity development and mutually beneficial relationships". The problem is, following Pashby and Andreotti, that this type of framing serves to hide a paternal benevolent relation of power. As they state, the capacity building through knowledge and expertise of Finland is concurrently tied to the national self-interest (*export of education*) and to the human capital rationale (*well-educated and fluently English-speaking university population*).

Furthermore, a straightforward connection between culture and economic growth is established

in the document: *"In terms of the power of art and culture in development, the cultural and creative industries are a key area of economic growth globally in the years to come. The significance and potential of culture in the process of development is, however, far greater, deeper and intricate"* (D1, p.13). Development is seen in the light of economic growth and that is how art and culture can contribute. Apparently, there is a need to emphasise and give space to the economic dimension of development, while other impacts on the process of development are not articulated but suggested with big words (greater, deeper, intricate). The stated shortcut between culture and economic growth is simplistic, un-complicated and work to justify the activities of the network in relation to the South, as it is expected to result to economic growth in both, North and South.

Both these examples represent a universal understanding of political economy. Zein-Elabdin (2009, p. 1165) has raised this issue and argues that the superiority of 'modernity' and its obsession with 'development' is an assumption taken for granted in economics of cultural modernism. This assumption results in "a belief in supracultural laws of economic behaviour and movement" following the footsteps of the modern European achievements which are considered to be the "natural or historical norm" (Zein-Elabdin 2009, p. 1156). Since there is an inability to understand 'other' societies beyond the modernisation, the cultural framework is presumed and the economic tendency is disembodied from culture resulting as "a disavowal of culture itself" (ibid).

Essentialist culture = depoliticised culture

The presented analysis, in my eyes, reflects a Eurocentric approach to culture. The way the features of traditional and ritualistic are linked to the South, follows Said's (1978) perception of the exotic Orient that conceptualises culture as static, distinct, and fully knowable, and it is reduced as an object of knowledge through the rhetoric of 'preservation', 'protection', and heritage' (Wright 2012, p. 56). As seen in the documents, this rhetoric of the *preservation of cultural identity* and the value of *cultural heritage* are highlighted. This is quite the opposite of the postcolonial understanding of culture, in which it is not seen as static or essentialist but hybrid, dynamic and productive (Bhabha 1994; Andreotti 2011, p. 29). This essentialist notion of culture is built by attaching certain attributes and forms to it, e.g. through references to traditional and ritualistic features and defining it as something 'behind' compared to the norm. Culture is naturalised and mystified, and it is exactly through these myths that the reified and naturalised

meanings are reconstructed and reproduced.

Rizvi (2014) points out that the main problem with the essentialist notion of culture is that cultural formation and difference/diversity are separated from the social and political considerations. Culture is seen as ahistorical and treated as something fixed and the inherently political character of education is obscured (Rizvi 2014, p. 92). What follows is the learning from other cultures with the aim of breaking down stereotypes and reinforcing tolerance of diversity, the Other is not defined in relational terms, depending on the speaker's position. Instead, the Other is naturalised in representations that are assumed to be objective (ibid). By ignoring the political and historical aspects of the collaboration, the subaltern is silenced (see Spivak 1988) and the Western conceptualisation of knowledge, rationality, progress and justice are taken for granted.

Based on the documents, it appears that cultural diversity is celebrated as long as the North sets the rules. Through cultural diversity, northern participants can acquire exotic southern cultural experiences and the southern partners can be civilised by the North. Bhabha's (1994) distinction between cultural diversity and cultural difference is useful here to describe the coexistence of northern and southern cultures separated from each other. This leads to a romanticised idea of the collaboration, ignores the workings of power and privilege and contributes to the reproduction of unequal relations of power. In this situation, harmony is only achieved on the tacit terms of social *norms* constructed and administrated by the dominant group creating an illusion of consensus, i.e. an illusion of pluralistic harmony (Rizvi 2014, p. 94).

I want to return to the quotation presented in the beginning of the discussion and ask whether *culture has the ability to empower, mobilise, open minds and communicate?* Based on my interpretation, the universal idea of knowledge, development and economics, and the essentialist notion of culture result in depoliticising of culture, since the political nature and power of it is taken out of the context. The North not acknowledging its own ideological location and ignoring the power relations at work (see Andreotti 2012), does not support the equivocal and relational ways of knowing (Andreotti, Ahanakew & Cooper 2011, p. 45) or the ethical responsibility for the decision and actions of the North (Andreotti 2011, p. 93). Therefore, *culture may have the ability*, but it does not mean it automatically has, and in the depoliticised context it probably does not have.

Our universal culture - a source for global citizenship education

As I have argued in this paper, the analysed documents show a strong legacy of colonialism in the international partnership in this particular NSS network that is manifested in a tendency to 'develop' the southern partnership countries to the direction of northern idea of development. There is a clear distinction between the 'knowing and having' North and the 'lacking and developing' South. This distinction, the representations of culture and cultural, the cultural supremacy that the North is practising towards the South, the epistemic violence of the North by pushing its own agenda in terms of knowledge and development and the enthusiasm to civilise southern people accordingly, implicates the dominance of a single story in this collaboration of higher education institutions. The participants of the network are not provided with the 'tools' to question and to imagine education and global citizenship 'otherwise' (Andreotti & Souza 2012). Therefore, as a project of GCE, there is a lot of work to be done in order to move beyond the "ethnocentric, depoliticized, paternalistic, salvationist and triumphalist approaches that tend to deficit theorize, pathologise or trivialize difference" (Andreotti & Souza 2012, p. 1).

The view of GCE constructed in the documents does not seem to call for a change in power relations that are embedded in growing inequalities nor does it contribute to the expansion of the politics of difference (see Pashby 2011). By ignoring the historical legacies and complicities, justifying superiority and disregarding power inequalities and ideological roots (Andreotti 2012), the conceptualisation of the GCE presented in the data contributes to the agenda of 'new imperialism' in which "race discourse and the language of inferiority and dependence have been replaced by that of cultural diversity, nation-building and global citizenship" (Jefferess 2011, p. 27).

Does it mean that the projects of GCE are a way for students to polish their 'cosmopolitan outlook' by increasing intercultural experiences that allow them better positioning in the global labour market? (see Rizvi 2009) Or, is GCE a national project that is aimed to produce global citizens that represent their nations in the competitive knowledge economy? (see Khoo 2011) In both of these scenarios, the relational stance as an ethical responsibility towards the Other is missing (see Spivak 2004). The ethical relationship with the Other should not be based on merely knowledge and understanding, but on "'disarmament' – a willingness to be exposed to the discomfort and the joys of being taught by a plural and ultimately un-definable reality" (Andreotti 2015b, p. 103).

Conclusions

The analysis and discussion naturally evoke further questions and thoughts on the future of GCE and the role of higher education in reinforcing social inequalities. To end this paper, I want to raise some considerations and questions.

The understanding of culture has a significant impact on the direction and practices of international collaborations. Closer attention should be paid on the conceptualisations of culture and cultural, and those should be made more explicit among the students, teachers and other participants of international collaborations. This challenges the higher education institutions and academia to question their knowledge production practices and their role in constructing stereotypes, images and knowledge of colonial subjects and cultures.

In terms of global citizenship education, the question is how can we move towards the critical approach? The first step is to join those "who call for a more radical re-evaluation of the knowledges that we produce and reproduce through especially North-South partnerships" (Botha & Breidlid 2013, p. 274). This would take us towards the recognition of different stories and a practice of GCE that equips "people to live together in collaborative, but un-coercive ways, in contemporary societies" (Andreotti 2010, p. 239). Otherwise, we are limiting ourselves and our students to hear only a single story, a story that sees the Other with a fixed-mindset with universal outcomes. As this research has discussed, a single story, truth or understanding hinders the advancement of equality and justice, and includes some and excludes others.

More critical and ethical considerations might have happened on the micro level of the network activities, however, that has not been the focus on this study. Nevertheless, if it has happened, it seems that it has not happened in a self-reflexive way since it has not been included in neither of the documents, not even the final report, although it was written after the network activities. Thus, its possible impact remains merely on the micro level. This raises a question that if universities do not include the critical discourse in their practices (for example in the texts of different documents), when does the critical engagement begin on the macro level?

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