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East West: at Home the Best?

Hanneke Teekens
climes2013@gmail.com

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Hanneke Teekens
Department for International Academic Relations
NUFFIC

The author welcomes comments from readers.
Contact details:

Hanneke Teekens, Department for International Academic Relations, NUFFIC, Kortenaerkade 11, P.O. Box 29777, 2502 LT The Hague, The Netherlands. Tel: +31 70 42 60 230; Fax:+31 70 42 60 259; Email: hteekens@nuffic.nl

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Website: www.lewi.org.

East West: at Home the Best? [1]

Hanneke Teekens

Department for International Academic Relations
NUFFIC

Abstract

In the past, the world's diversity was screened off by distance, the lack of massive mobility and slow means of communication. Now, all peoples are faced with creating a learning environment where we have to prepare all our students with globalized living and working conditions. Increasingly, our 'home' is in various places, because we have multiple cultural identities. Academic teaching and learning is faced with the question on how to blend concepts of self, strange, foreign and otherness into new approaches on how to live with the post-modern paradox of cultural sameness and difference at the same time. We would greatly loose when a global 'cultural sameness' would be prevailing, but to go about diversity does not simply happen. It needs empathy and education, learned both informally and in schools and universities. An education that compasses the notion that the human experience is universal, but that all people are entitled to the dignity to have their own ideas and customs. And to have the right and the freedom to express themselves according to these ideas, while at the same time respecting these very rights of others. Universities must produce knowledge in such a way that cultural diversity is enhanced and tolerance for differences is respected in harmony with our environment.

Let me begin by saying that it is a great pleasure for me to be here and I would like to express my sincere thanks for the kind and honourable invitation to be a speaker at this workshop. This meeting brings together people from different backgrounds, and it addresses a topic that concerns everybody who is involved in the internationalisation of higher education. So, I am very happy to be able to share some of my thoughts with you. In preparing for this workshop, I have been asked to discuss 'the practical side' of things. I have chosen to take the teacher and student as my point of departure. But it is clear that there are no simple 'practical' solutions to the complicated issues and questions we are facing. So bear

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[1] This paper was presented as the Keynote Speech of the International Workshop on Internationalising the Curriculum and Learning Environment, with a Special Focus on East-West Studies, David C. Lam Institute for East-West Studies (LEWI) and Wing Lung Bamk International Institute for Business Development (IIBD), Hong Kong Baptist University, 18 November 2004.

with me, when, for the sake of 'this practicality', I will bring conclusions in 'easy' terms of 'we shall not' and 'I argue that'! The anecdotes taken from my own experience represent personal insights and are by no means intended as a blueprint. I do hope, however, that they will act as a spur to further debate.

East, west, north, south

The title of my presentation refers to an old Dutch saying, *Oost West, Thuis Best*, which translates as 'East West, home *is* best'. No question mark, no doubts, but the reassurance of the familiar and representing a world view that sees 'home' as the norm. It is intriguing to notice that the words *east* and *west* do not really stand for places, do not even represent directions on the mariner's compass, but are used to indicate differences, ways of thinking, the geography of thought (Nisbett, 2003). This use of *east* and *west* implicitly indicates anti poles. Using the words this way means excluding 'home' from the dilemmas this poses.

My question mark tells a different story. As a result of globalisation, *east* and *west* have been juxtaposed, and '*Eastern*' and '*Western*' patterns of thinking are becoming intermingled.

This is not to say that *all* differences will blend, but differences will come in new forms. Forms that in themselves seek to include aspects of different cultures and traditions, necessary for communicating across the cultural divide between various regions and groups, a meeting of minds. But humankind is not just a rational species. Emotions constitute just as much of our cultural make-up as reasoning does. More than ever, emotions direct the way we feel and act, perhaps at times even 'against the way we think'. Increasingly, religion is the basis for these emotions and, in the eyes of some, the most important basis for new clashes between people (Huntington, 1998). Two weeks ago, the Netherlands saw how emotions rule—and not thought—after the murder of a well-known cinematographer.

However, increasingly, not religion but economics determines the real divide. The *north* and the *south*, the rich and the poor, who are living in both the *east* and the *west*—and everywhere else—represent a growing percentage of the world population. It is estimated that, in a few years, for the first time in history, more people will live in cities than in the

countryside, making migration to the city one of the most important phenomena of our time. In many countries, living in slums means insuperable poverty for millions of people (United Nations, 2003). This urbanisation trend creates conditions that deeply estrange people from their cultural roots, challenging those who, on a full stomach, have the cultural liberty to have ideas and to argue, or even fight about them (Human Development Report, 2004). So, although differences between *east* and *west* may become more subtle*,* it is not likely that confrontations between *north* and *south* will be less immediate and profound than in the past. However, cultural differences within nations may well become much more difficult to handle than conflicts across borders.

The context

In the past, the world's diversity was screened off by distance, the lack of massive mobility and slow means of communication. Nowadays it is the other way around. Niches of 'cultural homogeneity' are scarce, and the notion is further disabled by the supersonic speed of technological development leading to more immediate communication, both real and virtual, between various people. More and more people lead lives in diaspora, in which 'old' cultures will blend into new and puzzling compilations of communities, characterised by both a perplexing coherence and a baffling disconnection and in which global ties may be stronger than local links (Teekens, 2004). The impact of the market has not left higher education untouched. There is a global quest for talent, and young people will seek new opportunities wherever they can find them. The person I have in mind was born in Vietnam, studied for a bachelor's degree in his own country, did a master's degree in the US, a PhD in the Netherlands and is now employed in the Philippines. What is 'the' culture of such a person? To whom does he feel close: those who live next door, or the boys and girls he grew up with? He does not see them much, but he chats with them every evening after work. Who will he marry and in which language will they speak? What will be 'home' for them and their children? What are his loyalties, and how does this person contribute to society? In the context of this workshop, the most important question is: how has the thinking of this person

been shaped by the learning environment of higher education? Has higher education shaped this man into a world citizen, someone with a 'global culture'? And what are distinct aspects of *east* and *west* in this respect?

Global developments

I would like to argue that the person in my example is a cosmopolitan with excellent *communication skills between and across cultures*, having lived and been successful in very different situations. Undoubtedly—as a result of his biography—this person will have changed over time in the way he thinks, feels and acts. He is not 'typically Vietnamese', if there is such a thing! However, his various experiences have become contextualised within the *eastern setting* of his first learning and schooling in Vietnam. I know another student from Vietnam. He studied in Germany, did a PhD in the Netherlands and now works in Hanoi. He once said to me: 'the problem is that I am a German in my own country'. He left his village when he was seventeen years old, coming from a remote area, never having been on a train or even a bus. His 'Western' outlook on matters often does not fit with a lot of what he considers 'typically Vietnamese'. Is he perhaps a 'displaced person', who, as so many others as a result of biography, political and economic reasons, may end up where he is, but where he does not feel 'at home'? This person feels alienated and uprooted, possibly marginalised.

As a result of modernisation, we all may look alike and use the same products, but this uniformity is only a façade. Differences on the outside may be more subdued as a result of modernisation, but that does not necessarily relate to the way we think, or feel. And it certainly does not take into account that 'living' is 'local', creating new loyalties and emotions in people. Cosmopolitanism does not simply come about. It needs self-reflection and imagining (Chan, 2003). International students who do not feel at ease in their new local situation (for whatever reason) will group with people from their own country, creating their own 'local setting' that excludes their real surroundings and closes them off from interaction with local students and new ideas, or even non-acceptance of general rules. This aspect surfaces in many housing problems, especially when it comes to food. Food is essential in

how we feel, and the preparation of food is an important element in this. The way food smells and how it looks, how we organise the kitchen and how we consume our food are all part of this. Do we do it together as a social act, or by ourselves? In Amsterdam, I have witnessed many problems between students precisely about this concern. The 'rules' about food are one of the most important hidden codes of our culture and have little to do with practical solutions. Another situation is the students who want to integrate but who claim a 'specific cultural space' for their own ideas and customs. On many universities, there is a debate taking place about prayer rooms. Should each religion have its own room, or should there be a 'room of silence' that can be used by everyone? Another issue that is highly contested in Europe at the moment is the custom of Muslim women wearing a headscarf. This is a right that is granted in the public universities in the Netherlands but that is not allowed in Turkey, a country with a predominantly Muslim population. Some weeks ago, two Dutch Turkish women students (born and raised in the Netherlands) wanted to go to a university in Turkey for an exchange period within the Erasmus programme. Because they were not going to be allowed to wear their scarves, they eventually declined the scholarships. Their views were that they were entitled to wear a scarf in the university were in fact based on the Dutch law and not on Turkish law, in spite of the fact that, in the Netherlands, their wish to wear a scarf is seen as 'Turkish'. Another example involves Chinese customs. I witnessed a debate about funding for a special Chinese party for Chinese New Year. In the university where I was working at the time, special Christmas decorations were put up in the canteen and other areas. When the Chinese students started preparing for the Chinese New Year party, they demanded special funds. What should a Dutch university do: fund each nationality when it comes to celebrating the national festival? But then I was very much surprised to see Christmas trees in many public places in Thailand. When I asked if Christmas was celebrated a lot—in a predominantly Buddhist country—the answer was 'no', but we like those decorations and it is good for tourism. An outer form—the Christmas tree—has lost its original meaning in a new context. But not everywhere. In France, a Christmas tree had to be removed in a school, as a sign of religion, forbidden in a public school, as a consequence of the strict division of state

and religion. Clearly, globalisation has brought us into closer contact with different cultures and their various expressions. Many of these symbols we use in our own context, but we are also adding meanings. And at times, we are unaware of the original significance.

What we also see is that, as a result of globalisation, there is a rising fear that a global culture will be imposed on the world, leaving little room for cultural diversity and self-determination. This makes people more adamant in clinging to local customs, sometimes even 'going back' to them. The rise of more fundamental forms of religious belief is another element of this phenomenon. Distinct cultural diversity is part of the human experience, as are—and to some extent as a result of this—misunderstandings between individual people and nations.

In spite of the claim of universities that they are 'universal', the teaching function of higher education, by and large, is very national. As such, universities play an important role in sustaining cultural identity and diversity. In my opinion, there is a great danger for higher education when it embraces the idea of 'a global' culture, because this idea provides an excuse for the role, the difficult but extremely important role that universities have, to educate students—and to some extent educate the wider community—to learn to communicate *between* cultures and sub-cultures. Cosmopolitanism defines the capacity of people to adapt and to communicate. It does not mean 'we all think the same'. Globalisation does not create a global mindset, but it does create a very urgent necessity to reach out beyond local conditions and to deal with cultural diversity as a trait of post-modern society (Nussbaum, 2000). Global contacts have brought us in touch with different kinds of food, dress, festivals, rituals and symbols. But seeing them does not mean that we understand what they are expressions of. To be able to 'decode' the messages of other cultures is, in my view, the most important aim of intercultural studies. They can be defined as desired specific learning outcomes in knowledge, skills and attitudes in students. To reach this goal, it is necessary to have an understanding of the fact that, intercultural studies, or in this case East-West studies, is never just a body of knowledge on cultures. It only becomes knowledge in the context of previous knowledge and cultural understanding. When the background of

student A is blue, and the background of student B is red, the effect of the same curriculum, with, say, the colour yellow, will create in student A the colour green and in student B the colour orange. So, it is not just the curriculum that we must pay attention to, or the debate on its 'colour', whatever that colour may be. We have to look at and understand the cultural mechanisms at work in the learning of students *through* the curriculum. To stay with the example of colour: how do we make students understand *why* blue and yellow become green, and *why* red and yellow become orange! And last but not least, how can we create a situation in which learning outcomes constitute a mosaic of colours rather than a mix (or mass!!) of colours? A mosaic that indeed provides insights in how colours work. We must develop an understanding of colours and an appreciation for them. In dealing with learning, we now must first turn to the context of learning: the institutional setting and the international classroom.

The institutional setting

Traditionally, the ideal aim of an academic education is to develop critical thinking in students. In reality, in many places, the national and political dimension of a university is an obstacle to this ideal. In most cases, we see that the core task of higher education is the education of national élites in the sciences and professions. The way higher education is organised and financed also clearly indicates its national character. Many countries demand instruction in the official language and require specific national qualifications for their academic staff. Programme development often leads to national curricula, and activities labelled as 'internationalisation' take place outside mainstream institutional activity. From this perspective, we can say that most universities are national in scope and action.

Globalisation challenges the notion of 'national' education. In fact, it turns the question around: what should remain a clear national component in a curriculum? And in the context of our topic, this means: how *Western* or *Eastern* should we remain, because 'national' stands here especially for 'culture'? What are the values and norms we base our education on? This is really saying: how do we integrate longstanding tradition and innovation, innovation not just in the curriculum but also in the mobility of people and ideas? Students learn not only in

the institutional setting. Increasingly, information from the Web is also shaping our views and actions. It is estimated that some students spend as much time behind the computer as they do in the classroom. Are professors aware of this?

In countries with fewer spoken languages, the question of the language of instruction is an important one. Should universities use the native language, or turn to English? But then, what about the native language? I have experienced this dilemma with my son. He studied for his bachelor's degree in international management in an English stream, together with international students. When he began his master's, in Dutch, he discovered that the level of his native Dutch needed upgrading, because he was not very good in using 'academic Dutch', clearly a necessary skill for a university graduate in the Netherlands. At the same time, his English is much better than 'average', and he has learned to study and to communicate with people from different backgrounds, studied a semester in Sweden, and did an internship in Germany.

In summary, we can state that universities are national in scope and action, but that the impact of globalisation questions the role of national curricula and requires new and different knowledge, skills and attitudes in both staff and students to deal with the paradoxes of globalisation. How well are we prepared in adapting the curriculum to meet the demand of this challenge? As a matter of fact, still too many universities see mobility as the most important aspect of 'internationalisation' and forget curriculum development altogether.

Specific contents and multidisciplinary approaches, as in East-West studies as a 'subject', play a very important role in changing the institutional setting from a national perspective into a multi-perspective one. A pre-condition for creating an international classroom is that you need both students and staff from the East and the West. I once saw the beginning of a programme in 'Asian studies' at a Dutch university that involved no Asian partners. How 'Asian' is such a thing? Let me return to food! Some time ago, I made a reservation in a Chinese restaurant in Amsterdam for a group of forty colleagues, a busload. When I arrived in the restaurant, the waiter (a Chinese person) just about fainted and became almost angry with me. 'Why did not you tell me your guests are Chinese? Don't you

understand that I cannot give them the food that we serve to you?' No, I did not understand and I started to become upset as well. He dashed off to the kitchen, we got a drink on the house, and a wonderful meal was prepared. When I now go into a Chinese restaurant, I first look to see if there are Chinese customers. If not, I do not consider it Chinese! What I would like to say here is that we have to be careful not to treat the folkloric as if it were the only, or true representation of culture. What we see is often more or less a touristy version of lived culture. I also think of the parties with international students in which everybody wears his or her 'national costume'. In fact, many students wear these things for the first time in their lives, just because of the occasion. I know from experience when wearing wooden shoes. In fact, I had to buy them for the party!

We have to try and find a real cultural base and avoid escapism into the exotic. But 'a dive' into reality is ever more difficult because of technology as well. Being 'cut off' is hardly possible these days. Virtual and actual experiences blur and could create an illusion of an experience that has not really been lived. When I was an exchange student in the US in the sixties, the contact with my family was through letters, sent by airmail and arriving about a week after mailing. Only one time, at Christmas, we had a short telephone conversation. And this was very expensive. Now, international students read their own news in their own language on the Net, chat all the time with family and friends, and mobile phones go off all day. Do we really 'arrive' in a new environment, when we do not ever 'leave' home (Engle & Engle, 2002)? East-West studies (or other forms of specific area studies) play an important role in exploring the dimensions of culture and explaining them. As such, they have a mission beyond the scope of their disciplinary orientation. They are agents of change in our 'national' institutions. In this time and age, it is necessary to prepare *all students* for globalised working and living conditions, at home and abroad. The concept of cultural diversity embraces the general assumption of increasing diversity as part of modern life. Now let us turn to the classroom and the curriculum.

Aims of the international classroom

The curriculum is the source for teaching and learning, involving

- the subject content (lectures, books, syllabi etc.),

- the delivery by the professor

- the interaction of the professor with students,

- the interaction among students themselves.

Let me return to the metaphor of colour. I claim we like to see our students as 'Blanco'! No colour, empty. Too often, students are seen as mere receivers, as open cups into which we like to pour as much content as possible. The more content is absorbed, the more successful the student (and the more famous the professor). And we want our students to come out (as a result of our excellent teaching) in one colour: the colour of our curriculum. That means we want our students to reproduce the colour. They have to show they have understood that 'yellow' (or green, blue, or any other colour) is the 'right answer', the good score, the good result. It is a mono-perspective view on learning and outcome. It represents a monochrome view on cultural issues. It denies that there are other colours that have an intrinsic value and that are possible answers to the questions raised. I do not want to promote relativism, both in a cultural and pedagogical sense, as an answer to the complexity of choice. But I do want to say that intercultural questions as raised in East-West studies must accept different outcomes: a mosaic or even a kaleidoscopic view. Culture is never static; by looking at it, it changes.

The main purpose of the international and therefore intercultural classroom is to create a truly interactive and multi-perspective academic community. This does not 'simply' happen. It requires prearranged settings and clearly defined aims. Learning is not simply aimed at the 'delivery' of teaching but involves interaction among the various actors and thus is shaped— to a large extent—by the learner him or herself. Such an environment requires a conceptualisation of the international classroom as a proactive setting that supports cross-cultural learning for all involved. The teacher as well!

Proficiency for professors under 'normal' circumstances is not enough in the international classroom. One must feel secure enough in the knowledge and delivery of the

subject matter to be able to deviate substantially from a well-established canon. Totally unexpected questions and perspectives, on first hearing apparently totally irrelevant, will be common and must be dealt with in a positive way.

The requirements for teaching in the international classroom could be summarised as follows:

Knowledge:

- The lecturer must be a good academic, with ample teaching experience and a thorough knowledge of the subject.

- The lecturer should be aware that the well-established canon of knowledge in his or her field might differ substantially in other academic traditions.

Skills:

- The lecturer must be able to present the curriculum in a context that allows students from different backgrounds to fulfil their learning needs.

- The lecturer must be able to treat the subject matter of his or her discipline in such a way that examples from various cultural and educational settings are used.

Attitude:

- The lecturer must be open, flexible and interested in the teaching and learning that is customary in other cultures.

- The lecturer should be aware that some students ascribe him or her a different role as a teacher and as an individual from the one he or she has been used to within his or her own tradition.

- The lecturer should reflect on the cultural context of his or her role as a teacher.

In the context of this presentation, I will not go into the specifics on the content of East-West studies. First, I am not knowledgeable enough to do so, and second, I would like to focus on the meta issues concerning the setting in the classroom. From this perspective in an

'ideal situation', we would like to see our students develop specific competencies on top of knowledge in a special field of study. I think of the following cluster of aims:

- Issues related to using a non-native language in teaching and learning

- Factors related to dealing with cultural differences

- Dealing with different teaching and learning styles

- Dealing with different academic traditions

- Integrating the cultural aspects of using media and technology

- Acknowledgement of foreign education credits and labour experiences

Within each of these aims, we can distinguish among knowledge, skills and attitude. In other words, it is not only what we know but also what we can do and how we behave. How we think, do and feel. How we involve our head, our hands and our heart.

Using a non-native language of instruction is a very complicated matter. All educational activity is linked to language, and it will be clear that this concern refers to an issue so important that discussing it in the scope of this presentation cannot do it full justice. But dealing with cultural diversity in the international classroom is, to a large extent, dealing with language issues, because language expresses so much more than what is literally said. The practice of using English as a language of instruction by non-native speakers is now widespread. But that task is greatly underestimated in the process of providing education for culturally mixed groups. The use of a *lingua franca* can result in misunderstandings, as each group uses the language in its own way. Everyone might be speaking easily but using the language in his or her own cultural context and not realizing that the others may understand the words but not comprehend the meaning as it was intended. And words have different histories themselves. Let me use the word 'cosmopolitism' as an example. In both the *East* and *West*, this word is often used to explain the process of cultural backgrounds 'fusing with' and cross-fertilising each other. It has a positive connotation; it relates to open contacts between groups and individuals. But this same word was also used in the past by Eastern European countries in their international political relationships with the former USSR. For people from countries like Hungary, Rumania etc., the word has a very negative sound and

they do not like to use it to describe intercultural processes. Especially in social and cultural studies, students may have a very different understanding of words that they know and understand but that they cannot use because of previous connotations.

Humour as well as body language and other non-verbal signals communicate important messages that can easily be misinterpreted. There is nothing as difficult as being funny in another language. Why do you think Mr. Bean is so popular? He does not talk! And we should not forget that what is satire in one context may be seen as offensive, or even insulting, in another one.

In dealing with cultural differences, the participants in the classroom should be aware of their own culture and understand that this strongly colours their own views. You cannot look at another colour when you do not realize that you have a 'colour' yourself. I did not mean skin colour, but of course this plays a role as well. We must try to avoid thinking in stereotypes, and to behave and express opinions without resorting to generalisations. We should try to made adjustments for cultural differences within the group while at the same time respecting these differences. This includes not just the differences between one's own culture and those of other group members but, let us not forget, also differences within our own group.

Different academic traditions can have very different views on professional identity, curriculum validation and student assessment. These views can easily clash. In some countries rote learning and the reproduction of facts is very important; students from such a tradition will not easily adapt to a teaching style which requires problem-solving and group work.

But academic tradition is more than that. It has to do with role-taking and the perception of that role. One of my students expressed his astonishment about the fact that 'this famous Dutch professor' was riding a bicycle. Why did he do this? He must earn enough to use a car. The student felt that the public behaviour of this professor did not correspond to his status. When the professor does not show certain behaviour, how can his students pay him enough respect? The same goes for notions on 'appropriate' dress. There is nothing as difficult as

understanding the dress code in another culture. My Vietnamese students would always come to the examination ceremony as if they were going to a wedding, in my eyes! These examples do not just relate to matters of being 'formal' or 'informal'. They concern the issue of creating a safe place for appropriate communication. What if the professor does not behave like a professor? How am I to know how to behave like a good student (Bannink, 2001)?

Teaching in higher education increasingly requires the use of media other than 'talk and chalk'. The way media are used is part of the academic tradition. In a teaching and learning environment that is highly technological, involving sophisticated use of computers and telecommunications, personal relationships take very different forms. On the one hand, learning becomes more individualised while on the other hand new opportunities open up for team learning and communication. This has important consequences for the aims of instruction and the supervision of student activities. It will make teaching more system oriented and less person oriented. It will change the role of the professor from the source of knowledge to one of a broker of knowledge. But does this mean that the professor is 'on standby' twenty-four hours a day. Some students think so!

What and how much students have to learn, and the weight that is assigned to this, is another area for potential misunderstanding. And so are marks. In different traditions, there are different grading scales. The question is: can you be perfect? Especially in East-West studies this is a very fundamental question, and it relates to my previous mention of colours. Is the perfect grade the one that represents the colour of the curriculum? Or, can the perfect score be a reflection of the issues raised, or even a critical analysis?

The relationship between the curriculum and career preparation has great implications for teaching in the international classroom and how it relates to combining work and formal education. Do we really use the cultural knowledge of students as resources?

Desired learning outcome

We see at the moment in all of our countries a quest for talent. All universities want to attract the best students. We live in a very competitive world. In the past, international

education usually represented forms of cooperation and exchange, the exchange of people and ideas. Increasingly, we see how collective forms of cooperation are changing into individual forms of competition, between nations, between institutions, and between individuals. We are now dealing with global knowledge production in a highly competitive environment with very strong links to professional bodies and business and industry in general. The notion of the university as 'the ivory tower' is long gone. I would like to stress the fact that increased competition also means an increased need for an important cultural dimension in teaching and learning. The context of global learning is more culturally defined than ever before. We will need to acknowledge this to keep peace, at home and worldwide. To be able to function in globalised working and living conditions, students must be competent in:

- Intercultural dialogue, both in domestic and international settings
- Being stable, having a cosmopolitan outlook but confident in their own identity
- Being good professionals and willing to remain lifelong learners
- Having good language skills in at least one language other than their mother tongue.

Aspired qualifications

These points are no easy 'thou shall' items. It will be difficult—very difficult—to educate our students to be 'perfect' in these respects, but we can strive for this. It means that graduates do not only know things but know how to apply knowledge, have skills and know why they want to do things the way they do them. They have attitude goals that show broadmindedness and understanding and respect for other people and their values and norms.

Culture is the expression of a code shared by people with same values and norms. It comes 'with mother's milk', as a professor of the University of Amsterdam once said. It is with us from our earliest moments. Culture is not only what people *do* that unites them in their customs. Cultures are essentially based on *how* we *think*, the 'software of the mind'

(Hofstede, 1992). A country's education system is one of the most important agents in reinforcing and enhancing cultural notions at large. Culture is learned, but because it defines the way we think, feel and behave, it is deeply ingrained and therefore difficult to 'un-learn'. But cultural values are also something we want to cherish, and when they are threatened we want to defend them. Cultural roots make us what we are but should not capture us and prevent us from travelling the roads we like to choose. Culture is never static and is always the result of interaction between social groups and thus of our own actions as well.

Multiple cultural identities and the post-modern paradox and challenge

In the world which we are increasingly confronted with multiple cultural identities, we are faced with the question of how to constitute academic learning that blends concepts of *self, strange*, *foreign*, and *otherness* into new approaches on how to live with the post-modern paradox of cultural sameness and difference at the same time, for others and oneself—elsewhere and at home. The ideal lecturer knows how to be a lifelong learner her or himself and who knows how to create conditions that allow students to learn from each other. The ideal student wants to be a producer of knowledge rather than a consumer of information. Let us never hope for a situation of a prevailing 'global monochrome culture'. The world is enriched by cultural diversity, provided the gap between the rich and poor narrows. We would greatly lose when a global 'cultural sameness' prevails, a uniformity that would be an outward—and dangerous—façade only. But diversity does not happen easily. It needs empathy and education, learned both informally and in schools and universities, an education that must teach students to compass the notion that the human experience is universal but that all people are entitled to the dignity to have their own ideas and customs. And to have the right and the freedom to express themselves according to these ideas, while at the same time respecting the rights of others. In my view, it is the most important task for our twenty-first-century universities, whether located in the east, the west, the north, or the south of our global village. That means that universities have an important role in de-learning stereotype that is exclusive of different ideas, beliefs and opinions.

We must produce knowledge in such a way that cultural diversity is enhanced and tolerance for differences is respected in harmony with our environment.

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