

Institution: London Metropolitan University		
Unit of Assessment: Education		
Title of case study: Exploring the student experience of internationalisation and cultural plurality in UK higher education classrooms.		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Professor Jan Bamford	Head of Student Experience, London Metropolitan University	1/09/1991-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Bamford's research has achieved significant impact from an educational, pedagogical, social, cultural and institutional policy perspective. This impact was achieved through effecting a change in attitudes, behaviours and awareness amongst university staff and students, both nationally and internationally. The research has improved the experience and educational opportunities for students from different cultural backgrounds, this includes UK and French BAME students and international students in UK and French institutions. The research has influenced the process of understanding how these groups of students engage with and receive their higher education. Internationally, the findings have led to awareness of the need to understand cultural difference in education settings, for example, in both UK and French higher educational settings.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

From 2014, Bamford led an HEA funded research project that explored interactions and engagement in higher education by students in culturally diverse classrooms in urban higher education institutions (HEIs), as well as exploring the use of social media as a support tool for teaching. The research used a mixed methods and multi-stage action research approach, to the collection of data. The data was initially collected across two HEIs but was expanded to collect data from students at an additional 6 UK HEIs. The findings from this research culminated in the publication of a book, (R1). The first tranche of data collected included an electronic survey delivered to over 2000 students across two institutions and two faculties, field notes from observations over a four week period at each institution, focus group interviews, individual interviews following teaching interventions and a further 30 interviews undertaken with students from 8 HEIs across the UK. The final stage interviews were undertaken to explore further the findings from the first stage of the research and gain a more in-depth picture of the lived experience of higher education through the student voice. Bamford and Pollard, (University West Scotland), were one of the first research teams to adapt the US based National Survey of Student Engagement for UK use. The project findings highlighted the importance of an inclusive approach to pedagogy (R1). Developing an understanding of the different patterns of communication of students from ethnically (in particular those who are defined as BAME students) and culturally diverse backgrounds (including international and European students) have served as important in influencing attitudes and awareness. The findings have emphasised the need for pedagogic approaches to encourage engagement for students (R1, R2) from different cultural backgrounds in higher education. The findings have also led to the development of a further research project, designed as an action research project focused on a technology-based intervention. This new project allows for different demographic groups to engage in participatory design. Students have acted as co-designers in the project enabling the researchers to explore how the findings might be taken further in a context of participatory design. The evaluation of the intervention is a further

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research project undertaken by London Metropolitan University's Higher Education Research Group (HERG) in 2020, the initial findings of which have been presented at an international conference. (R6). The findings from the international and cultural pluralities in the classroom project have resulted in recommendations for action, such as universities incorporating cultural awareness training for staff and students and developing approaches to the curriculum that allow for cultural difference to be incorporated in teaching approaches. (R4, R5). The first stage findings identified that amongst respondents, nearly half did not speak English at home (R2, R3) and that for most, the university environment represented an environment of struggle, that there was a need for building resilience, the importance of relationships and dialogue, as well as the silencing of voices through distancing and the potential for dissonance for those from different cultural backgrounds (R2, R3, R4). We also found that contrary to our initial expectations the use of Facebook was not as popular as we anticipated when introduced by tutors: we found that the use of social networking sites as a teaching forum are not popular among students, across all cultures, unless introduced by the students themselves. (R3, R4, R5). The findings have led to a focus on innovative methods of delivery in using students' virtual learning environments, which appear more popular with students (R6). Findings have led to the development of an international project, looking at virtual international mobility through the use of technology, with colleagues in Italy, Sweden, Cuba and Australia. The first international network meeting to explore cultural difference in international contexts was held virtually in October 2020 and further meetings will be held in Greece in August 2021. This network is part of the international stream for HERG and HEIs in France, Italy and Cuba are bidding for research funding and linking with an established international network, International Tourism Masters Network.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- R1. Bamford, J., and Pollard, L., (2019) *Cultural Journeys in Higher Education: student voices and narratives*, London: Emerald Publishing
- R2. Bamford, J. and Pollard, L.V. (2018) Developing relationality and student belonging: the need for building cosmopolitan engagement in undergraduate communities, *London Review of Education*, 16 (2): 214–227. DOI <https://doi.org/10.18546/LRE.16.2.03>
- R3. Bamford, J., Djebbour, D., and Pollard, L., (2015), "I'll do this no matter if I have to fight the world!": Resilience as a learning outcome in Urban Universities, *Journal of Multicultural Education*, Vol 9 No 3, 140-158
- R4. Bamford, J., Djebbour, D., and Pollard, L., (2014), Does subject matter, matter? A comparison of student engagement in culturally diverse classrooms in urban, cosmopolitan higher education institutions in the UK, *Investigations in University Learning and Teaching*, Vol. 9
- R5. Bamford, J., and Pollard, L.V. (2016) "We take care of her - they don't!": an exploration of students' relationality in culturally diverse higher education classrooms', *British Educational Research Association Annual Conference*, Available at: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Printable-programme-without-abstracts-2.pdf>
- R6. Moschini, E., Bamford, J., Heugh, S., (2020) The London Met Digital Citizenship project: A gamified online programme to develop an inclusive and participative online experience to enhance student retention, academic performance and achievement. *APT Annual Conference*, London

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Bamford's research has led to changes at the institutional, national and international level resulting in benefits for both students and staff. As Holley states, Bamford and Pollard's work has provided "researchers, practitioners and leaders in education [with] a unique perspective" enabling them to understand the cultural framework underpinning both HE and the student experience. (S7) The findings have informed and influenced approaches to teaching and learning (S2, S3, S4), and raised awareness of cultural difference in the classroom (S1).

The evidence demonstrates the reach and significance of the impact of the research with students, staff, and institutions as beneficiaries both nationally and internationally.

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Institutional impacts

At the student level, interventions have led to teaching and learning improvements for the beneficiaries, the students; through improvements in the student experience for BAME and international students; through the development of a richer understanding of their educational experience and the importance of understanding differing communication patterns amongst those from different cultural backgrounds in the classroom; and through raising awareness of cultural difference in an international context (R1). International students in particular have noted the benefit of modules developed to support their adjustment to living and studying in the UK, “... *when we never lived in UK, information about UK people, their habits and the "protocol" are very very useful.*”(S1). Positive feedback of the benefits of cultural learning was received from the students on a developed module, who reported on the benefits to them: “*The Workshop is indeed vital to me as well as to my fellow classmates with whom i have spoken...(student 1)*. Another student advocated that the course be made compulsory as all students would benefit, noting “*it can help everybody but not everybody realize that or they think 'I don't need this stuff.'*” The module would provide them with skills which “*can truly help them.*” (student 4) (S1) Bamford’s research findings also resulted in the introduction in 2014 of a postgraduate to undergraduate peer mentoring scheme and the introduction of two undergraduate modules on intercultural communication and business communication at London Met. One optional module had enrolments of over 180 per year of undergraduate students from 2014-2016, of students from different cultural backgrounds, with around 50% Erasmus and study abroad students, the rest being international students. Feedback on the module confirmed that students had increased their awareness of cultural difference and changed their attitudes to working with ‘others’. The module therefore fed into the process of increasing and enhancing understanding of cultural difference, as most were from outside the UK.

As a result of the survey findings, low levels of communication were identified across student groups and with institutions, and a core Business Communication module was also introduced across 4 undergraduate courses at Level 4, with approximately 80 student registrations per academic year from 2015-2017. The module was also designed to aid in enhancing the students’ sense of belonging, which was identified in R1 and R2 as important to improving the higher education experiences for BAME and international students. A new intervention – the London Met Digital Citizenship project –was introduced in 2019 to enhance student belonging as a direct result of this research. The intervention uses the student virtual learning environment via a gamification approach to enhance transferable skills and build community and cultural awareness. Students are awarded badges and rewards for engaging in extra-curricula activity. In its pilot year (2019-2020), feedback for the intervention has been enthusiastic, with students reporting, “*This is a truly great initiative that has made me feel like I am travelling through the university – thank you!*” (Student 1) (S1). “*The Passport experience gives me more than just my degree and it encourages me to do more with my community.*”(Student 2) The inclusion of students in the development and delivery of the intervention has enhanced its relevance and significance to the student population. It has been piloted across all business students in Years 1, 2 and 3 and in the School of Computing and Digital Media and School of Human Sciences. The London Met Citizenship project has been so successful it is being rolled out across the whole university, although this has been paused due to the Covid-19 pandemic for this academic year. Since the introduction in November 2019, 1900 students were included in the project and 2020 badges for activities relating to the development of skills have been awarded. The intervention will form the basis for the international network project, as the intervention is expanded overseas through the ITMN Network (AGM October 2020) (S10).

At departmental level, Bamford’s research findings led to the introduction in 2014 of departmental policy of raising cultural awareness at the home HEI and Greenwich University Science Faculty. Staff training events are held annually, with at least 30 members of staff attending each event between 2014-2020. The understanding of the different patterns of communication of students from ethnically (in particular those who are defined as BAME students) and culturally diverse backgrounds (including international and European students) have served as important in influencing attitudes and awareness. This is illustrated by a nomination in support of a university award: Bamford’s research “*greatly contributes to improving LondonMet’s educational provision, given our diversified student cohort.*” Speaking of the influence of Bamford’s research in influencing and informing institutional awareness and discourse, a colleague noted, “*The*

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pedagogical study meeting we had two weeks ago was really productive and it stimulates my interest on Cultural Diversity topic of the 21st century.” (GSBL colleague) (S1). Bamford has contributed to university wide staff development events, most recently at the 2020 Festival of Learning: drawing on the findings from her research in a university wide session, with some 90 attendees, entitled, Teaching in the Culturally Plural Higher Education Environment, feedback indicated a positive influence on participants, “What a fantastic, illuminating and engaging session! Beautifully framed to emphasise that cultural diversity applies to any classroom with mixed groups, not just ‘internationalisation’. More, please!!” (participant 1). “Brilliant, inspiring session by Jan Bamford using vivid, powerful and thought-provoking images, examples and case study to stimulate deeper thinking about the nature of culture, issues around intercultural communication and interaction, and key principles for enabling intercultural conduct, dialogue and learning in the HE classroom.” (S1)

National impacts

By presenting and participating at external workshops, Bamford has shared her research findings with colleagues across the UK HE spectrum and has informed the debate on internationalisation and cultural plurality. Her presentation on *“Global Citizenship & Internationalising the Curriculum”* at a Higher Education Academy (HEA) event in 2014 which *“explored the various definitions of global citizenship and how educators might use the concept in their teaching and learning practice [including examining] notions of global citizenship in relation to the development of cultural fluencies in an educational setting and how this is linked to international students experience of UK higher education”*(S2) informed the independent pedagogy consultant, Hilaire Graham’s approach to the subject. In her 2015 seminar on internationalisation and the creative arts to Robert Gordon University, Ms Graham used Bamford’s definition of global citizens, as it had been explored at the HEA event, in the context of Scotland’s HE (S10).

External workshops on teaching in a culturally plural environment were held between 2014-2018, which incorporated and reflected the findings from the research and aided the participants of the workshops in understanding the experiences of BAME and international students in higher education. The workshops have raised awareness and influenced attitudes amongst peers at a national level, with participants from a wide section of universities’ staff across the UK providing feedback that indicated the workshops had achieved changes in attitude and awareness of the challenges for BAME students and international students. The organiser of Understanding Moderngov noted: *“I have just seen the feedback forms for International Student Experience course last week. The feedback is really good and many of the attendees have found the workshop particularly helpful and practical. Thank you very much for your fantastic facilitation.”*(S4). As the minutes from a PFHEA seminar demonstrate, *“Bamford’s work has informed change and the raising of awareness of cultural difference by provoking discussion of cultural dissonance and the Intercultural Development Inventory,”* acknowledging how *“the different cultural backgrounds of students, as selecting groups of similar cultures might restrict learning”* and *“how to improve the experience of others by awareness, empathy and openness.”*(S3)

International impacts

In addition to influencing practice and discourse change in the UK HE environment, Bamford’s research findings have had international impact. Bamford has been invited to deliver workshops specifically aimed at influencing postgraduate students’ understanding of cultural difference. Bamford’s contribution to the *“Université de Savoie Mont Blanc’s ITM induction week for [their] international students and returning exchange students”* has influenced the development of *“an understanding of cultural awareness and making sense of international experiences on study abroad opportunities.”*(S8) With international opportunities benefiting the students’ experience, Florence Besson-Reynaud, Université de Savoie’s Head of Languages, advised that they have been working with Bamford *“to deliver and enhance international learning opportunities in an online environment for students, which will enhance the impact [on students] of her cultural diversity knowledge and expertise.”*(S8). Following an Erasmus partnership meeting, a workshop element to develop intercultural competences was developed and included in an international student residential for Masters students, by Bamford at the Université de Savoie, with 38 attendees between 2018-2020. Feedback from the participating students demonstrates how their participation in the course has influenced their development and understanding of, and attitudes towards,

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interculturalism: *“the knowledge gained will help me to improve my cultural self-awareness”* (French student 1,(2020)); *“[it’s] important to understand concepts of ethnocentrism, racism etc, so we can manage a team in an efficient way”* (French student 2, (2020)); *“I believe this is a valuable tool to enable me to take a step back and appreciate different cultures and to become more open to others”*(Canadian student (2020)).(S8,S9).

Based on her findings, Bamford developed a new module on understanding different cultures in a business context for a partner institution in Paris. The module was delivered to 240 students in a French institution between 2014 – 2017 (S5). Feedback, demonstrating impact was received from students, *“indeed I learned to take into account the difference of cultures in business. An ad or product (in my case) have to be adapted to the population and its culture.”* (S1)

As Professor Holley states: *“There is significant impact and recognition, especially in terms of interdisciplinary, cross institutional and international working”* as a result of Bamford’s research. *“Of particular note is Dr Bamford’s’ international partnership work [which] been theorised, as evidenced by the recent Cultural Voices book, [and] has also lead to international networking...The cultural sensitivities and skills she brings are clearly fed into teaching, learning and assessment; and to inform her working with her own students, and to the benefit of the wider student population.”* Holley goes further and confirms the impact of Bamford’s work in her own institution, *“Here at Bournemouth, [Bamford’s] work has been disseminated, and is feeding into our current work, at a period of Covid-19, in terms of how we reconceptualise how we can welcome international students.”* (S6)

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

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- S1.** Student and staff feedback (2014-2020)
 - S2.** Report on for the HEA Seminar on “Speaking without words: art design and performing arts as a global language for global citizens” UAL Central St Martins March 31st 2014 (hard copy available)
 - S3.** PFHEA – London and Southeast area, Inclusive curriculum - minutes
London Metropolitan University, 12th March 2019
 - S4.** External workshops, for example, two in 2018 for an organisation called Understanding Moderngov with a range of delegates from across the UK.
<https://www.moderngov.com/courses/improving-international-student-experience/>
 - S5.** Input into module development in Paris School of Business 2015-2017
 - S6.** Testimonial from Professor Debbie Holley, Bournemouth University November 2020
 - S7.** Bamford and Pollard Book launch July, 2019:
<https://microsites.bournemouth.ac.uk/flie/2019/07/13/launch-of-cultural-journeys-in-higher-education-book-bu-academic-invited-to-give-keynote/>
 - S8.** Testimonial from Florence Besson-Reynaud, Universite de Savoie, May 2020
 - S9.** International Tourism Masters Network (ITMN) AGM Minutes – October 2020
 - S10.** Hilaire Graham’s presentation, June 11th 2015