Liberating the “oppressed” and the “oppressor”: A model for a new TEF metric, internationalisation and democracy

The paper proposes a statistical model for a TEF metric that could liberate the “oppressed” (international students) and the “oppressors” (home students) from the influence of public policies which, through constructions of international students as “supplicants” and “beneficiaries” of the prestigious British education system, have created conditions for their exclusion in the classroom. It is argued in the paper that such representations have contributed to international students’ subordination through coloniality and have also limited home students’ agency to engage with their international peers on socially and politically equal terms. The paper conceptualises the design and philosophical nature of a supplementary TEF metric that could prevent such symptoms of public policies. It also shows how such a metric could work in practice by modelling the UK Engagement Survey (UKES) data from a case study university. The paper proposes ideas about how understandings and practice of internationalisation could be re-articulated through the proposed metric. As such, it also discusses new “standards” of internationalisation that could enter reputational rankings and ways in which they could be applied internationally.

Keywords: Internationalisation, TEF, democracy in education, equality, policy representations

# Introduction

A lot has been said about the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Commentators have not shied away from criticising the exercise for not measuring teaching excellence (e.g. Moore 2017; Derounian 2017) and for potentially causing reputational damage to UK universities, especially abroad (Fazackerley 2017). Now, that the results from the first round of the TEF have been published, most analyses focus on deconstructing the TEF methodology (Baker 2017).

There is, however, one more aspect of the TEF that is largely ignored in “expert” discussions about the exercise. This aspect relates to the role of the TEF in perpetuating outdated views on internationalisation. Internationalisation in this paper is understood as the growth of universities that enter into new social and educational interdependencies with international people (here mainly students) and should therefore undergo social changes that accept these people as democratic equals (Salili and Hoosain, 2010). Drawing on existing literature, the paper will first enact ways in which the TEF prevents universities from realising these ‘types’ of changes, and it will then show how, though inclusion of a new supplementary metric, the TEF can create intensions for and understandings of benefits of such changes. The benefits that the paper focuses on are those that arise from democratic inclusion of international students for those students themselves, but also for home students.

The paper was prompted by questions as to why, as the national exercise intended to measure teaching excellence at the time when universities in the UK, and around the world, are becoming more and more internationalised, the TEF does not consider ways in which universities create conditions for democratic participation of international students. The absence of any attempts to assess such aspects of university teaching in the TEF raises important moral and theoretical concerns about the type of value internationalisation has for British universities. The paper therefore calls for inclusion of a metric on internationalisation in the TEF, to help translate the publicly stated commitment to international students into practice which, as generally agreed, is rarely materialised (e.g. Spiro 2014; de Wit and Jones 2018). It is however important that it *does* materialise, especially at the time when potential international students are looking to learn, through the TEF results, about other international students’ course satisfaction and levels of teaching quality (International Students Survey 2018). Finding ways of translating this commitment into classroom practice is also important in more general terms because, internationally, globally mobile students will continue to cross borders every year (Bothwell 2018), and nationally, because Britain’s leading position in internationalisation is threatened by growing international students’ perceptions of the UK as a xenophobic country (International Students Survey 2016), by Brexit (Marginson 2017) and by higher education developments around the world that are changing the traditional patterns of international students mobility (Calderon 2018).

Additionally, universities’ long connection to the nation state and imperialism (as it is the case in the UK – see Hayes 2017), poses an ideological ‘threat’ to internationalisation, which brings a deep tension between nationalism and cosmopolitanism (in Rizvi’s (2009) terms of emphasising greater equivalence of perspectives beyond the nation state and acknowledging new relationalities that surround changes in host communities that are becoming more and more hybrid, especially in relation to knowledge production, through their interconnectedness with global people). Common good discourses, for instance, that underlie this connection, in the sense of contributing to people’s agency (i.e. their civic development and social justice), never include international students, as if the latter were not real people. In fact, international students are often represented as a ‘threat’ to this agency as their ‘value’ for home students is continually questioned in public discourses (Hayes 2017). This has recently been evidenced, for instance, by the Migration Advisory Committee survey which was commissioned by the Home Office to assess the impact of international students *on* home students’ experiences of university. The survey has now been withdrawn but, as Callaghan (2018) has argued, ‘in a multitude of ways the message is conveyed that the experience of the UK student is to be centred. How do ‘They’ affect you [i.e. home student] is the only question that matters. The international student is considered of value only insofar as they positively impact UK students, and heaven help them if the hegemonically positioned British student suggests that the presence of foreigners in ‘Their’ universities troubles them’ (Callaghan, 2018, ,ii).

There are substantial gains arising from mobility of students for home learners. These gains have been shown for instance in some of the data modelled for this paper (see Table 2), revealing that home students presented higher levels of belonging to a classroom community on courses where they were actively encouraged to engage with international students on democratically equal terms. These gains however are not always available to home students as public policy, creating perceptions that international students are inferior, socialises university staff and students into particular power relations with them that do not challenge traditional social and educational hierarchies (Gorski 2009). Home students therefore, on their own and without the help of their tutors, lack agency to engage with international students on politically and socially equal terms. But it is rarely their fault, as their lack of agency to do so is often restricted by limitations of their own social backgrounds, public discourses that continually question the value of their international colleagues (ibid) and structural understandings of internationalisation which, shaped by commercial rankings, do not require universities to create conditions for realisation of international students as democratic equals (Hayes, forthcoming).

But whilst it is obvious that international students’ rights to democratic education may suffer from such conditions, which in its own right should be a good enough reason for re-conceptualisation of internationalisation through the TEF, it is not often considered that home students suffer from such conditions too. But they do, because, as the data modelled in Table 2 show, when democratic inclusion of international students is not practised, benefits of internationalisation are not made available to home students, making their education highly socially unjust. The paper therefore argues that there is a need for a TEF metric that will liberate home students from the effects of coloniality – that is, a process which, under the influence of public discourses about international students, operates based on the logic of cultural, social and political domination over foreign students in an education system (Ghiso and Campano 2013). This process denies home students access to civic and democratic development through internationalisation.

The TEF has been chosen in the paper as a vehicle that can effect such liberation because, being a national policy concerned (at least in principle!) with excellence in teaching, it can function as a ‘master’ process and a discursive power (Foucault 1969). It can therefore prompt pedagogical intentionality that can contribute to democratic life of international students, and also through doing so, it can simultaneously contribute to the democratic life of home students. Such reciprocal effects of this intentionality will be analysed in detail in the closing section of the paper, titled: *What can the TEF do for the “oppressed” and the “oppressor”?* Thus, the paper is about ideas for creating a common frame, through the TEF, that will prompt universities to practise fairness and justice on the basis of obligation for sector-wide democratisation of relationships with international students. If such democratisation is part of the TEF, the exercise will shape understandings of internationalisation practice as a process of social change and one that is based on consistency in delivering transformation. What this means is discussed in more detail in the closing section of the paper, drawing on theoretical ideas by Paulo Freire (1970) about pedagogies that can liberate both, the oppressed (international students) and the oppressor (home students). The conclusion draws attention to international implications of such a metric. The paper addresses the following questions:

1. How can the TEF metric show the extent to which realisation of international students as democratic equals is associated with the characteristics of the teaching process? How can the TEF show the benefits of such realisation for home students?
2. How can we use national data to design a metric that will reflect such relationships?

It also needs to be highlighted here that the emphasis in the paper on the need for the new TEF metric that could ‘obligate’ universities to practise democratic education is not intended to question individual commitment of people who already do so. It is rather intended to deepen readers’ consciousness that the problem with achieving sector-wide commitment to democratic education is primarily *systemic*. It will be argued in the paper that teaching policies such as the TEF create espoused values that drift away from core ideas of democracy. These values cannot be changed by individual efforts or inter-cultural curricular shifts which do not have the backing from the political power. The key arguments of the paper are therefore based on the idea that we need to ‘fight fire with fire’ and they are intended to change the system. Systemic change cannot be achieved through individual efforts; it has to *be initiated by* and then *sustained* by the system.

Whether we like it or not, in the current climate of commercialisation of higher education and competition in reputational rankings (in which internationalisation plays a huge part but under the influence of global competition race, is also constructed mainly as a structural tendency of universities to become more ‘multi’ – see discussion in the next section), rankings and metrics that drift attention away from core ideals of democracy and social justice in education will not go away. But it would be naïve and lazy to argue that we have no choice. Instead, a ranking that will create a standard framework for addressing questions of realisation of international students as equals and through that, will arguably liberate home students from the effects of coloniality, needs to be created. A model for such a ranking is discussed under sections *The model* and *Results*. The model is based on multilevel modelling of sector data drawn from the UK Engagement Survey (UKES). Section *The model* also explains why UKES was the most suitable data to be used here. First, however, the conceptual terrain guiding the paper is outlined.

# Policy as Power and Re-conceptualisation of Internationalisation

The notion that national policy discourses engender strategic behaviours at universities is not new (e.g. Vught et al. 1999; Watson 2011; Hadjisoteriou et al. 2015). Arguments that these behaviours establish new controlling structures to enable policy ideas to flow into educational practice (e.g. Kehm and Stensaker 2009) and that they are aligned to the “business” of higher education expansion, especially in terms of internationalisation and globalisation, are not new either (e.g. Robertson and Dale 2015). Such links have already been established in relation to the TEF, with Hayes (2017) arguing that TEF representations of international students as “supplicants” and “beneficiaries” of the prestigious British education system lead to strategic behaviours at universities that exclude them as “equals”. Previous research has also pointed out that such representations are rooted in the British history, imperialism and the subsequent promotion of the British education as an asset (e.g. Williams 1984; Walker 2014). Pietsch (2012) explains that, through imperialism, Britain has been able to exercise power in the process of the expansion of their education and argues that, consequently, university internationalisation in the UK has always been highly unequal, excluding those “foreigners” who benefit from it from equal treatment.

But while the influence of hegemonic public policies that socialise university governors, educators and students into thinking that international students are “inferior” would be difficult to deny (e.g. Gorski 2009), it does not mean that it cannot be changed. As noted by Ball (2009), there is always a hybrid network of stakeholders involved who, through their own ‘sister’ policies, can regulate, soften and even challenge, the legitimation of conditions of a wider set of policies surrounding social actors, such as international students. In the context of this paper, this means that whilst the wider public policies that create differing conditions for participation of international students in educational and social life of the country of education, and through that, limit their access to the same benefits home students can access with no restrictions (e.g. Marginson 2012), TEF policies, on the other hand, could mediate these limitations by inviting, through adequate restructuring of its metrics, new imaginaries of international students – ones that position them as democratic participant in the process of education.

For this to happen, however, the TEF needs to be distanced from the socio-politically and historically entrenched attitudes towards international students. The subsequent sections of the paper explain how this distance can be achieved, through a design that is outlined in sections “The Model” and “Results”. The significant characteristic of this metric is that its nature is *apolitical*, creating a much needed distance from the symptoms of politicised international students policies that limit their chances for inclusion as democratic equals (e.g. Pietsch 2012). What makes the metric apolitical is its philosophical basis, which focuses on preventing disadvantaging discourses about international students, rather than challenging their symptoms *after* these discourses have crept into the public domain. Arguably, the proposed metric can achieve this because it is based on forging solidarity in the classroom, drawing on Dahl’s (2000) ideas about how democratic associations should work. These ideas include creating conditions of equal and effective opportunities: for making everybody’s views known to other members, to vote on these views (i.e. through classroom discussions and dialogue), to create opportunities for learning about relevant alternative views (which brings enlightened understanding) and to give all members rights of citizens, through treating *all* as though they were equally qualified to participate in the process of making decisions about learning (ibid ,37-38). Hence, the UKES items that have been selected as the core of the proposed metric include questions about developing skills in working with students from other backgrounds, but also about opportunities to express students’ own views and ethics (see section “The model”).

Based on conceptualisations that policy is *power*, in the sense of functioning as a discursive practice embodying a process through which dominant reality comes into being (Foucault 1969), a TEF metric that is based on philosophical assumptions such as those cited above from Dahl (2000) could arguably engender a more democratic reality for international students, as opposed to amplifying their subordination; as the exercise has been shown to do now (Hayes 2017). Functioning as discursive practice, policies dictate actions and shape habits that ‘install regimes of truth’ (Bacchi and Bonham 2014, , 177), through active deployment of political and social discourses to create rules of participation and being (Foucault 1969). That is why they are called ‘discursive practice’ and not merely a ‘discourse’ because their meaning encloses whole systems of thought, guidance for this thought and subsequent action, which permit what consequently happens in real life (ibid). Thus, if the proposed metric became part of the TEF, it could set an agenda for patters of interactions between home and international students that are based on reciprocity and mutual respect. And if , in turn, these interaction became an official referent in a national league table, subsequently they would also be “noticed” internationally (Hazelkorn 2015).

International echoes of the TEF are especially important for Britain now – that is, at the time when trends of centralised evaluations of teaching excellence in higher education are growing worldwide (Gunn and Fisk 2013). As noted by Brockerhoff et al. (2014), whilst some time ago, assessing excellent teaching was mainly a matter for individual universities and was primarily an internal process of evaluation, it has nowadays become a mandatory process prescribed nationally by policymakers who view it as a means to winning institutional rivalry; both at the national level, as well as internationally. In Germany, for example, such views have resulted in national initiatives like *Wettbewerb Exzellente Lehre*, introduced in 2010 to establish a national competition framework for teaching excellence. Similar frameworks have also been established in Sweden and Finland (Brockerhoff et al. 2014), as well as outside of Europe, for example, in the USA, where institutions across all 50 states have been signing up to the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) which “aims to compare the institutional effectiveness of curricula, programmes and teaching” (Mok 2017, 172). The CLA has subsequently formed the basis of the OECD Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) project (now put on hold), which has in turn informed the design of the latest EU-wide initiative – a teaching assessment framework called CALOHEE (Comparing Achievements of Learning Outcomes in Higher Education in Europe).

Such developments can be best explained by neoliberal theory, which understands higher education as a market commodity and is built around developmental dynamics that do not always honour ethical questions of, for instance, critical pedagogy based on democratic plurality (Mott et al. 2015). Instead, neoliberal dynamics emphasise performance competition expedited by comparative activities such as national and global league tables (e.g. Lynch 2015). It has also been argued that, in their quest for reputational outputs in these league tables, organisations veer towards homogeneity, whereby global indicators of excellence provide an environment for their re-organisation (e.g. Acer and Güçlü 2017; Seeber et al. 2016). Consequently, over the past 30 years, there has been a global movement to expand the role of universities (Robertson et al. 2002; Brennan et al. 2004; Thompson 2017), as institutions have become moulded into becoming more “multi”. This expansion has been explained by Clark Kerr(2001) and his theorisations about “multiversities” who argues that universities nowadays need larger and more complex scale of strategies and purposes to feed organisational expansion which evolves under conditions of globalisation and the world class university competition. Kerr (2001, 5) posits that “multiversity is not a reasoned choice among elegant alternatives” but a consequence of an economic idea that is here to stay. This also affects internationalisation (Haapakoski and Pashby 2017).

Fallis (2011) also notes that in their quest for becoming more “multi’, universities have lost their allegiance to the social contract between university education and democracy because the latter provides a counterweight to the economic idea. It is argued here that internationalisation is particularly susceptible to losing its democratic ‘stance’ because, while many of the new purposes of “multiversities” require direct, functional and *social* changes in organisations, in the sense of accepting “others” as equals, (e.g. Farrell and Van Der Werf 2007), rankings performance in the internationalisation category seems to be one that is the ‘least’ demanding, as far as social changes in the sense of accepting foreigners as equal are concerned. When compared to supporting research performance, for instance, which may require new infrastructures, provision of information, institutional and international mergers, but primarily acceptance that ‘others’ are equal producers of knowledge (e.g. Fallis 2011), internationalisation represents a category of performance that relies purely on structural measurements which do not require any such acceptance. Structural indicators of levels of internationalisation developed by commercial organisations such *Times Higher Education*, which include referents based on international-home students ratios, numbers of internationally co-authored publications, or internationally co-led research projects create reputational ends for universities that do not require them to commit to plurality and education that is free from coloniality. It has in fact been argued elsewhere that because presently, internationalisation is measured in terms of extensivity and intensivity, even universities with the most conservative cultures and deficit-orientated views on international students can be assessed as highly internationalised (Hayes, forthcoming).

The TEF therefore, being a major higher education reform that has been ‘shaking up’ traditional university rankings based on research performance, has the potential to engender understandings of internationalisation that functions on the basis of establishing and maintaining equitable, just and democratic conditions for international (and home) students’ participation. To realise this potential, two types of changes are however required. One means creating a distance between politically entrenched attitudes towards international students and current metrics in the TEF; the second one requires separation from the influence of the structural assessments of “excellence” shaped by commercial rankings. These changes can be achieved by a shift in the TEF outcomes, through a process of measurement that is explained below.

# Changing the TEF Outcomes

Superficially, the stated commitment in the TEF to all students signals a significant break with other policies that have established the unequal position of international students in British higher education (for review of these policies, see Lomer 2017). Years of representing international students as economic objects and inferiors seem to be finally ended by the TEF that is willing to address diversity in higher education and opportunities for students from all backgrounds (BIS 2015). Unfortunately, the details of policy documents regarding the TEF contain little that is new when addressing the position of international students. In fact, most TEF metrics seem likely to reinforce the unequal value of their perspectives, identities and learning behaviours in the classroom (Hayes 2017). There are therefore two important changes that need to be introduced to the TEF.

The first one means undergoing conceptual and ideological re-structuring of the TEF metrics. There must be a shift in the focus of what the TEF actually measures, meaning that the current metrics based on benchmarking (BIS 2016) need to be abandoned and replaced with metrics that capture the social complexity of intercultural relations in the classroom and the ways in which these relations are engineered by university tutors. This would require metrics focusing on the *relational* nature of the links between student characteristics, various organisational factors, and most importantly, the characteristics of the teaching process. Metrics that capture this relational nature would enable assessments of the contribution of the relationship between all those characteristics to equal, just and free from coloniality education. This could be achieved through multilevel modelling of student and institutional factors, which are explained in the model presented in the next section.

But for the TEF to consider such metrics, the second, and perhaps the most important, change is required – that is, a change in the TEF outcomes. It is argued that the exercise should not be based on calculating the distance between a university’s score in the split categories and their benchmark (Z-scores), nor should it consider proposals for measuring teaching intensity based on contact hours and student-staff ratios in the classroom. These are outcomes that *already exist* and are *independent* of the *nature* of the teaching process. Instead, the TEF should capture a degree to which teaching on the course contributes to students’ equal and democratic membership of the classroom community. Such assessments will not only enable universities to establish the extent to which international students are realised as democratic equals in university classrooms but will also show how such realisation benefits home students. The results in Table 2 presented in the “Results” section have been purposely included to support this point. These results show that home students present higher levels of belonging to a classroom community on courses where they are actively encouraged to engage with “the other”. This seems to suggest that they do not ‘fear’ the other, as has been sometimes suggested (for review see Harrison 2015) but rather that the benefits of studying alongside the ‘other’ are not made available to them by the lack of pedagogical intentionality that could encourage reciprocal relationships. The results in Table 2 also highlight that the proposed metric is not intended to encourage pedagogies of ‘reparation’, in the sense of overemphasising identities of international students because, for instance, universities may suddenly want to repair the damage representations of international students in public policy might have caused. The proposed metric is rather intended to prompt pedagogies which will respect international and home students’ basic human rights to access full social, educational and developmental benefits of their university education. Arguably, such objectives reflect the ‘common good’ functions of universities, in the sense of contributing to people’s agency through civic development and access to diverse global knowledge and ideas (e.g. Williams 2010; Leal 2017). The model described below fits the bill.

# The model

Working within the constraints of the national data that are already collected by the sector, and that can also be used for comparisons across universities, without having to develop any new surveys, UKES data have been chosen for the proposed metric. Ethics approval for this research was granted by the case study university from which the data were sampled (Ref: ERP3152). UKES data is collected centrally by UK universities who subscribe to the survey. The sample data in this paper were obtained from central services who administer UKES at the case study university. The original data were collected in an anonymised form and consent was given by all participants to take part in the survey.

The UKES is presently the only national survey that asks about engagement with students and reciprocal relationships students and staff develop in the classroom. The questions in the UKES survey also ask about the degree to which the students think certain relationships or attitudes towards diverse students have been encouraged by the teaching on their courses. Thus, for the model, questions that are the closest to telling us about ways in which equal and democratic membership of the classroom community are engineered by the characteristics of the teaching process have been chosen. The proposed metric is based on questions that explore whether the overall student experience on the course contributed to developing their understanding of people from diverse backgrounds, and whether alongside developing these understandings, the students also had opportunities to develop and clarify their personal views and ethics. Such reciprocity is important for the ideological basis of the proposed metric which, as already alluded to in section *Changing the TEF Outcomes*, is not intended to overemphasise identities of international students, and by extension, perhaps even invalidate identities of home students. The ideology behind this metric is rather intended to invite pedagogical intentionality that focuses on the complimentary effects of both types of identities and how these effects can create conditions for inclusion of both groups of students as “equals”. Neither international nor the home students are considered here to be homogenous, but the reason why they are put into these two groups is that the former represents a group that has traditionally been oppressed in education, and the latter has somehow acted as an oppressor.

The specific questions from the UKES survey that were included in the analysis are listed below. The analysis was adjusted for student individual characteristics to see how much student-related factors (see below ‘student predictors’) and ‘course’ factors (see ‘course predictors’ below) contributed to students’ sense of belonging as an ‘equal’ member of the classroom community.

***Outcome (Dependent Variable)***

Thinking of your current view of the course as a whole, to what extent do you agree or disagree that...

a. I feel part of a community of staff and students.

1- Definitely agree

2 – Mostly agree

3 – Neither agree nor disagree

4 – Mostly disagree

5 – Definitely disagree

***Course Predictors (independent) variables – related to the teaching on the course***

During the current academic year, how much have you been encouraged to do the following activities?

a. Contributing to a joint community of staff and students

1- very much

2- quite a bit

3- some

4- very little

How much has your overall student experience contributed to your knowledge, skills and personal development in the following areas?

b. Developing or clarifying personal values or ethics

1 – Very much

2 – Quite a bit

3 – Some

4 – very little

How much has your overall student experience contributed to your knowledge, skills and personal development in the following areas?

c. Understanding people of other backgrounds (economic, racial/ethnic, political, religious, nationality, etc.)

1 – Very much

2 – Quite a bit

3 – Some

4 – very little

***Student Predictors (independent variables) related to student characteristics***

1. UK vs. non-UK
2. Course studied

Due to the ordinal nature of student responses to the UKES survey and because students are normally clustered within courses, the following random intercept cumulative model for ordinal data (using the R package for statistical analysis) was used:

Where j = 1,2, ….n is the course index and

i is the student index

: the cumulative probability for student *i* on course *j* on our dependent variable.

: the mean effect on the cumulative probability up to *c*-th category (*c* are categories of responses on an ordinal scale, including 1- Definitely agree, 2 – Mostly agree,3 – Neither agree nor disagree, 4 – Mostly disagree, 5 – Definitely disagree)

the effect (on the cumulative probability) caused by course predictors (independent variables)

the random effect (on the cumulative probability) caused by different courses

This model takes into account the ordinal nature of the responses and the hierarchical structure of UKES data (and can be used with any equivalent survey data collected from individual students who are nested under courses). In addition, the model takes into account any other ‘contextual’ factors operating at individual course level that may not be captured by the selected variables (i.e. UKES items), and that may be responsible for heterogeneity of responses, which is why ‘random effects’, measured at course level., were also included. This means that the predicted probabilities in Tables 1 and 2 take into account random course effects and the results include estimates of how much of the variation in student answers on the outcome variable (“I feel part of a community of staff and students”) can be explained by variations in teaching between different courses.

The model uses cumulative probabilities up to a threshold, therefore making the range of student responses binary at the threshold. The answer ‘some’ in each of the predictor variables at the course level was the threshold (i.e. cut off point), meaning that answers above ‘some’ (i.e. ‘very much’ and ‘quite a bit’) were positive, and answers below ‘some’ (i.e. ‘very little’) negative. This means that the results in the tables corresponding to each predictor variable at the course level, - that is, “contribution” (referring to question “*a”* in course predictors on the previous page), “development” (referring to question “b” in course predictors) and “understanding” (referring to question “c”), represent probabilities for students who answered “very little”. This also means that the baseline student in the table (labelled as “baseline”) was a student who responded “some” to “contribution’”, “development” and “understanding” questions. Estimations for a baseline student were run first (with no predictor variables) for purposes of comparison with the models that were run subsequently, including all predictor variables. Such a comparison was used to illustrate how the variability in student answers on the dependent variable changed, when different course characteristics were considered.

The estimates of how the probabilities of students’ sense of belonging to the classroom community changed, depending on whether their courses encouraged them to be part of this community and whether their overall experience of the course developed a better understanding of people from other backgrounds, whilst also giving equal value to their own views, are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Data from only one faculty are included below (from 366 students, clustered under 17 courses). The model can of course be used with larger samples from all faculties across any university (in statistical models like this one, larger samples give more robust results) but it was important to check here whether the model would also work with smaller samples (i.e. whether, if it were to become part of the TEF, it would work with courses that do not have many students). Separate analyses for each course were run, for home and international students, which were then grouped under subject-disciplines, using Level 2 of the Common Aggregation Hierarchy system (CAH2) developed by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) in the UK to group higher education subjects. CAH2 is proposed to be used in subject-level TEF. CAH2 divides courses into 7 subject groups, including: medical and health sciences, engineering and technology, natural sciences, social sciences, business and law, arts, and humanities. The results below are from two of these groups, which were coded here “Subject Group A” and “Subject Group B” to preserve anonymity.

The two examples presented in Tables 1 and 2 illustrate results from cases where “random effects” were noticeable (Table 2) and where they were not present (Table 1). They were chosen here to illustrate and explain how the results should be interpreted and what kind of information can be obtained from the model. The analysis of these two examples can reveal ways in which student responses change by subject disciplines, an objective that is sought in the current consultation on the subject-level TEF (DfE 2018). Results for home students (Table 2) are also important to support earlier points about the need to re-conceptualise internationalisation as these results show that home students report higher levels of belonging to classroom communities that engage all members as democratic equals.

# Results

Table 1 contain results for international students studying “Subject Group A”. The results in the table show *relationalities* between teaching characteristics and students’ sense of belonging as equals. The results indicate that teaching on courses characterised by the lack of reciprocity and intercultural relationships have affected negatively realisation of international students as ‘equals’. This can be seen, for example, in responses in the column ‘definitely disagree’, whereby the baseline probability of 0.0153 for students who do not feel part of the community (i.e. those answering ‘definitely disagree’) changes to 0.1225 for students whose course did not encourage them to make contributions to this community and to 0.1824 for students who presumably were not encouraged to engage with the cultures and identities of home students because they indicated that their course experience did not develop in them understanding of people from other racial/ethnic, political and economic backgrounds. By extension, the baseline probability of 0.2345 of students who generally felt they were part of the community decreased to 0.0209 for students who indicated that their courses did not develop in them skills of understanding people from other backgrounds. The small number for random effects (3.849 x 10-5) indicates that there were no unobserved effects in student ratings at course level in “Subject Group A” and even smaller number for ICC (Intraclass correlation Co-efficient )(4.5035 x 10-10) shows that the results in Table 1 cannot be explained by unobserved ‘contextual’ differences in courses. This seems to suggest that the effects of all predictor variables were more or less the same across all courses in “Subject Group A”.

*Table 1: Estimates, standard errors, p-values (in parentheses) and predicted probabilities for the random intercept proportional odds model - overall membership of classroom community*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **International students – Subject Group A** | | | | |  |
| *Threshold* | *Estimates* | *Std. Error* | Definitely agree | Mostly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Definitely disagree |
| First | -7.2543 | 2.2405 |  |  |  |  |
| Second | -1.1790 | 1.1891 |  |  |  |  |
| Third | 4.673 | 0.7128 |  |  |  |  |
| **Baseline** |  |  | **0.0007** | **0.2345** | **0.7495** | **0.0153** |
| *Slopes (for students answering ‘very little’)* |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Contribution | 2.1978 | 0.7501 (0.0034) | 7.851 x 10-5 | 0.0330 | 0.84455 | 0.1225 |
| Development | -0.2768 | 0.9034 (0.7593) | 0.0009 | 0.2877 | 0.6998 | 0.1161 |
| Understanding | 2.6672 | 0.9684 (0.0059) | 4.91 x 10-5 | 0.0209 | 0.7967 | 0.1824 |
| **Random Effects** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Course level*  ICC | 3.849 x 10-5  4.5035 x 10-10 |  |  |  |  |  |

\* Another model with only two covariates of ‘contribution’ and ‘understanding’ was also run as the covariate ‘development’ is insignificant (0.7593). The results from this model are close to the parameters provided in the table. This means that this covariate does not affect our predictions. No ‘random effects’ also means that in this particular case, a model without random effects would a better fit but for clarification purposes, a model with random effects was included to illustrate how the results can be interpreted. There is no column ‘mostly disagree’ because no students in this sample chose this answer.

Table 2 contains results for home students in “Subject Group B”. These results show that there are some random effects of contextual factors on courses in this group (0.5191), suggesting that the effects of the teaching process are slightly different for each course in Group B. The ICC figure in the table (0.0757) shows that 7.5% of the total variability of the results (probabilities for students feeling that they were part of the community) can be explained by unobserved (contextual) heterogeneity at course level. The overall direction of changes in probabilities is the same as in the case of results in Table 1, i.e. that the level of belonging to the community decreases for students whose overall experience on the course does not develop in them skills of working with students from other backgrounds and does not enable them to clarify their own views and ethics (in fact, our estimates for most students in all courses showed a similar direction). This can be seen in Table 2, for instance, in the ‘definitely agree’ column, whereby the probability of 0.1214 of baseline students who strongly felt they were part of the community decreased to 0.0633 if they did not develop skills in clarifying personal values and to 0.1190 if they were not taught to understand students from other backgrounds. Similarly, baseline students who ‘mostly disagreed’ they were part of the community (0.0702) were even more likely to disagree if they were not encouraged to make a contribution to this community (0.1287), not to develop their own views (0.1130) and understanding of ‘others’ (0.0715).

*Table 2: Estimates, standard errors, p-values (in parentheses) and predicted probabilities for the random intercept proportional odds model - overall membership of the classroom community*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Home students – Subject Group B** | | | | | | |  |
| *Threshold* | *Estimates* | *Std. Error* | Definitely agree | Mostly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Mostly disagree | Definitely disagree |
| First | -1.9791 | 0.5328 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Second | -0.1035 | 0.4809 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Third | 1.6781 | 0.5402 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Fourth | 2.3495 | 0.5969 |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Baseline** |  |  | **0.1214** | **0.3527** | **0.3685** | **0.0702** | **0.0871** |
| *Slopes (for students answering ‘very little’)* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Contribution | 0.9664 | 0.2960 (0.0011) | 0.0499 | 0.2055 | 0.4154 | 0.1287 | 0.2005 |
| Development | 0.7151 | 0.3723 (0.0548) | 0.0633 | 0.2427 | 0.4177 | 0.1130 | 0.1632 |
| Understanding | 0.0227 | 0.3484 (0.9480) | 0.1190 | 0.3495 | 0.3711 | 0.0715 | 0.0889 |
| **Random Effects** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Course level*  ICC | 0.5191  0.0757 |  |  |  |  |  |  |

The observed *relational* nature of predictor variables showing that in subject disciplines where students (both home and international) are encouraged to be part of the classroom community, and where the overall experience of their courses encourages respect for one another, through complimentary effects of learning about ‘others’ and giving ‘others’ a chance to learn about ‘self’, has important implications for the TEF. If the exercise is based on such relational outcomes, the TEF can re-articulate new meanings, practice and effects of internationalisation. These are discussed below.

# What can the TEF do for the “oppressed” and the “oppressor”?

Dehumanisation, which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it, is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human. This distortion occurs within history, but it is not a historical vocation. (…) Dehumanization, although a concrete historical fact, is not a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed (Freire 1970, 18)

It has been argued in earlier sections of this paper that UK universities’ long connection to imperialism and the nation state, as well as its resultant policy representations of international students, create a tension with respect to international students (the oppressed) which may make home student and university tutors colonised in mind and practice (the oppressors). The influence of history on such effects was discussed in section *Policy as Power and Re-conceptualisation of Internationalisation,* but this section, based on Freire’s (1970) premise that dehumanisation is not a given destiny, argues that the dehumanising effects of such coloniality, for both, the oppressed and the oppressor, can be reversed by the TEF metric the papers has outlined. Evidence in Table 2, which shows that home students present higher levels of belonging to a classroom community where everybody is treated as a democratic equal, is important for supporting key arguments below. Such results can be taken to mean that arguably, and to the contrary of some research showing that home students are not interested in interacting with international people on more equal terms (see latest review by Harrison 2015), home students may in fact be willing to do so but, influenced for too long by public policy discourses that their international peers are ‘inferior’, they lack agency to do it. When public policy continually creates unequal conditions for participation of international students in the social and educational life of the country of education, as it has been the case in the UK and elsewhere (Hayes 2018; Marginson 2013; Lee & Rice 2009), students (and university tutors) revolve around the idea that such inequality is the truth and “feel threatened if that truth is questioned” (Freire 1970, 13). What happens as a result is that “the oppressed are afraid to embrace freedom, and the oppressors are afraid of losing the freedom to oppress” (ibid , 20). This leads to situations whereby “single path of human progress and of the universal value of Western knowledge” (Stein et al, 2016, 4) is pursued, reinforcing home-based knowledge production as superior and international students’ constructions as lacking moral and intellectual capacity.

The alternative then seems to be to be to create a different type of “truth”, through a TEF metric, functioning as a policy discourse and a master power with the potential to socialise people into accepting that something else is truth. Such metric is then likely to engender actions to practise that alternative truth (Foucault 1969). Freedom from oppression and for the oppressed is acquired by conquest, not by gift (Freire 1970). That is why freedom must be pursued constantly and responsibly through the type of classroom activism that, as explained in section *Changing the TEF Outcomes*, does not enable coloniality or encourage pedagogies of reparation, to repair the damage caused to the oppressed, but one that is oriented towards equivalence of international students and through that, also towards liberating the oppressor. This can happen when learning (and teaching) is forged *with*, and not *for* the oppressed or *by* the oppressor. This means true solidarity, through reciprocal dialogue with international students, but without compromising the solidarity owed to home students (hence the UKES items in the proposed metric that encourage understandings of others but also clarifying ‘own’ views and ethics). It is only when complimentary effects of such exchanges are encouraged, the type of classroom reality that turns people into the oppressed and the oppressors for one another can be transformed.

But this requires a certain type of pedagogical intentionality that has to be based on consistency in delivering transformation. The “teaching standards” driving this intentionality would be equal, just and unprejudiced inclusion in the classroom community. Achieving these standards means consistently maintaining them where they already exist, or leading to transformation in the classroom culture where they are absent; and then maintaining them afterwards. These standards are not measured by any external indicators, nor there is a cut off point for them. The transformation that is either started or maintained is therefore not assessed against any external indicators, but it is rather consistently delivered. In that sense, it is not an end in itself, but a means to creating conditions for international and home students democratic participation in higher education learning. Pedagogical intentionality as consistency in delivering transformation has no “target” standard for “levels” of inclusion or social justice, which is why the proposed TEF metric that is based on this idea aims to rather identify whether it is practised or not. That is the outcome that is measured by this metric. Setting a “target” standard for inclusion or a “benchmark” would be daft and invalid , as classrooms around the world are likely to have different “specifications” (i.e. the composition of students answering UKES or equivalent surveys , and also populations that are likely to be excluded, will vary in different context) But the proposed metric measures the *relational* nature between student characteristics and the teaching process, which means that the differences in population will not affect the overall outcomes measured. Rather the point is to show how each classroom performs to its own specification.

Finally, in light of the influences of marketisation and reputational rankings (discussed in section *Policy as Power and Re-conceptualisation of Internationalisation)* teachers also need to act as “radicals”, and in that sense, the pedagogical intentionality encouraged by the proposed TEF metric is transformative for them as well. For too long university lecturers have been socialised into and complying with marketised imaginaries of international students, which have prevented them from entering into dialogue with the “oppressed” and getting to know them better (Schartner and Cho 2017; Madge et al. 2009). Thus, the type of pedagogy that the proposed TEF metric can encourage is liberitarian in nature, as it has the potential to transform the reality of oppression, through ceasing monocultural teaching diets and practices that are based on coloniality. It can instead help to create a reality of *all people as equals*. So, what can such a TEF metric do for the oppressed and the oppressors? It can create an officially agreed frame to deliver a process of sustained liberation.

# Conclusion

Focusing on the first research question about the ways in which the TEF metrics can show commitment to democratic life of students, the paper has shown that this can be done through the analysis of UKES data. This also answers the second research question about national data already collected by the sector that could be used for such purposes. There are of course some limitations of this model which lie mainly in the ambiguity of UKES original questions. Despite stating in the opening statement of the questionnaire that UKES is a survey about how students have been supported to engage with their *courses* and that *course* is used in the questionnaire to refer to *students’ programme of study*, the survey left some critics wondering whether the survey items ask about experiences in the classroom or more broadly, about experiences of the university. It is therefore recommended that the questions are re-written to make it explicit that the focus is on classroom experiences and teaching. It is also possible that some courses will have small samples of international students, which may lead to insignificant results. This should however be statistically tested and a decision should be made whether such data are reportable or not. If the proposed metric were to be part of the TEF, the UKES survey would have to be made compulsory.

But the aim here was not to create a ‘perfect’ metric, but rather to conceptualise its design and analysis, and to show how it could work in practice. The proposed model supports the key idea that it is possible to create a metric that provides information about *relationalities* between the characteristics of the teaching process and realisation of students as democratic ‘equals’. The main undercurrent of the metric is that it “measures” democracy as a relative concept. There are no absolutes against which the output cab be assessed, nor are there any universal benchmarks – this makes the metric *apolitical*. As such, the metric can be used for international comparisons as the relativity that underlies it removes the need to find a common basis for comparison. When used in individual national contexts, the metric would compare universities’ commitment to democracy according to their own specifications (and therefore can be used with any national data, also including more diverse populations that may be experiencing issues of non-democratic treatment - such as indigenous populations or BME groups). All countries would however be assessing the same core idea – that is, whether socially just, unprejudiced and free from coloniality education is practised. The proposed metric therefore responds to the growing critiques of TEF equivalents around the world (e.g. CLA, AHELO or CALOHEE), which leave out more critical “measurements” of internationalisation as one of the determinants of higher education quality and outcomes. Future research should therefore focus on how a similar metric could be developed under these projects as well.

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