

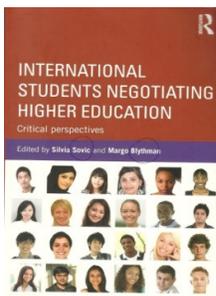
## Book Review

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## International Students Negotiating Higher Education: Critical Perspectives

Sovic, S., & Blythman, M. (Eds.). (2013). *International Students Negotiating Higher Education: Critical Perspectives*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Reviewed by *Uttam Gaulee (Doctoral Student), University of Florida (USA)*



*International Students Negotiating Higher Education: Critical Perspectives* is an excellent resource for higher education personnel and administrators in admissions and student affairs. Educational practitioners and policy makers may take advantages of this book. The volume goes beyond simply describing a profile of who international students are, by providing more information about their holistic experiences. The book highlights the interactions of the international students with curricula, tutors, administrators, and college and university personnel serving international students. Editors and authors showcase the complexities in the academic, personal, and social experiences of international students resulting from the challenges of language proficiency, cultural and social backgrounds and identities.

Organized in four parts, the book addresses four most relevant critical issues of international students—of policy, teaching and learning, language, and outbound mobility. Chapter 1 gives an editorial overview of the book and synopses of chapters that follow. Part I (consists of chapters 2-6) addresses common policy issues. In chapter 2, Simon Marginson portrays how international students are treated as Others, or outsiders, in the host country by society, peers, teachers, and administrators – and systematically by the political and legal provisions in place.

Chapter 3 examines the UK and the policy vacuum that exists regarding the protection of international student rights. Students are urged to better research and understand their rights – including that of quality assurance of the services they are entitled to receive in the host countries. Chapter 4 explores the experiences of international students in Ireland and advocates for re-establishing ethical commitment of care, responsibility, and cosmopolitanism departing from the existing “consumer model” and the “moral” basis for relationship with students (p. 39).

Chapter 5 has insightful implications from a case study of a UK institution during its process of creating an international strategy. The author discusses the notion of “internationalization” from the perspective of university managers responsible for implementing the strategy in the institution. In chapter 6, Elizabeth Grant highlights the need for an international curriculum that addresses critical global issues and prepares leaders to strive for equity and justice.

Part II of the book addresses the issues of teaching and learning. In chapter 7, Silvia Sovic describes international students’ perceptions of tutors in the creative arts. Sovic addresses teachers’ ethnocentric views of international students as deficient learners (lacking critical thinking skills). Margaret Kettle and Allan Luke (in chapter 8) further elaborate the “reductive and deficit” views

international students. Presenting two student-stories from China and Thailand, as they negotiate culture and western critical, dialogic education, the authors bring the conversations to an entirely different but significantly higher plane. In chapter 9, Ly Tran de-familiarizes common sense about the theory of transformation by taking an investigative approach. In Chapter 10, Michelle Barker, Raymond T. Hibbins, and Peter Woods explore business graduate level students' perceptions of global citizenship and applied frameworks of internationalization and formal and informal curricula. Yu-Ching Kuo (in chapter 11) projects international students as entrepreneurs who are self-motivated and responsible agents of their own life choices against the backdrop of the existing identity of international students as "victims, problems, and beneficiaries."

In Part III, Carol Bailey (chapter 12) takes an issue of unfair assessment strategies in practice. She calls for alternative and more inclusive assessment methods, so as not to put certain groups of students at a disadvantaged position. Weronica Gorska (chapter 13) points out the inadequate guidance that international students receive regarding academic writing.

Part IV of the book presents outward mobility of students and study abroad programs. Australian and UK students studying abroad are discussed in chapters 14 and 15 respectively. The authors bust myths and traditional views about international students, ushering in a different view about student mobilization and giving new meanings to the nomenclature used to capture the changing tendencies.

There are a few critical issues the authors could have considered more seriously, and other topics the authors did not address at all. For instance, in many chapters, it seems the authors idealize international students by generalizing them as the best and brightest. Assumptions of international student success can exacerbate international students' challenges. Many international students are certainly the "cream of the crop" from their home countries, but it takes time to be successful in a new academic and cultural system. This book lacks a direct focus on the academic transition and success of international students, and the contributors of the chapters have also paid insufficient attention to important academic issues. While it is not easy to cover all kinds of specific issues in various disciplines that international students face, but the book could have included a chapter on major disciplines like science and engineering which have high concentrations of international students.

Written by a host of authors including seasoned researchers, experienced professors, and practicing administrators working directly with the international students, the book excels in bringing out authentic voices and immensely useful insights about the current global situation of international students. With the wide range of topics covered and multiple new issues uncovered, the book is rich in information and implications that university and college personnel and administrators can utilize. Not only does this book expose stereotypes and debunk the traditional depiction of international students as a deficient population, it also provides methods to harness the unique strengths and ingenuity that international students bring to home institutions that can be leveraged to enriching home students' competencies.

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### **About the Reviewer**

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