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Putting the “international” into International Relations theory curricula: a global study

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2022
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/34008

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Abstract

It is now rather well established that most International Relations (IR) theories are predicated on Western knowledges. This potentially limits their analytical capacity to explain international relations beyond Western ideological values or interests. However, in recent years there has been a substantial increase in scholarship not only critiquing the Western centric nature of International Relations theory but also exploring the contributions that knowledges from the global South make to the field of IR theory. Thus, the status quo is shifting, albeit slowly, towards a field characterised by knowledge plurality as opposed to knowledge exclusivity. Nevertheless, the impact as well as the implication of this shift toward knowledge plurality for the IR theory curricula has not been paid adequate attention. Consequently, this research report investigates whether the demand for knowledge plurality in the realm of IR theory research has made inroads into the arena of pedagogy resulting in the generation of knowledge plural IR theory curricula. Moreover, it examines the different choices and interpretations made by educators in endeavouring to create knowledge plural IR theory curricula in various global contexts. It explores the types of actors, agents and structures that may have motivated, facilitated, or impeded educators in their decision to adopt a knowledge plural IR theory curriculum. It has further endeavours to discern the factors that have informed and/or shaped respondents' curricula and pedagogical choices pertaining to the selection, structuring and transmission of IR knowledge at tertiary education institutions in different geographical contexts. In general, the research provides a deeper understanding of how respondents who have adopted knowledge plural curricula have conceptualised and implemented such changes, as well as the implications of a knowledge plural curricula for the development of greater knowledge plurality within the discipline.