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As a Dutch citizen and as a hogeschooldocent/senior lecturer and researcher working at a University of Applied Sciences here in the Netherlands, I strongly oppose the Internationalisation in Balance bill which has been drawn up on selective one-sided information. This law has been drawn up based on an issue which affects only certain programmes at certain research universities and now is being imposed on all research universities and universities of applied sciences. In the remainder of this document, I put forward arguments which expose the faults within the proposed bill.

The bill should not apply to Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS): According to Nuffic only 7.7% of the total student population at Universities of Applied Science are international and according to the Dutch Inspectorate of Education only 6% of bachelor programmes are taught entirely in English. As proven by numerous research studies over and over again, international students and international orientated courses have a major impact on domestic students' intercultural competence development. If internationalisation is restricted within UAS, it will have serious consequences on the quality of the education we are offering.

Workload of Lecturers: In Dijkgraaf's letter introducing the bill, he claims that "Overflowing classrooms and heavy workloads for teaching staff are putting pressure on the quality of higher education" (p3). However, lecturer's workload and overflowing classrooms are not caused by international students. As previously communicated, at Universities of Applied Sciences, we only have a small percentage of international students and as we see from the stats of the Inspectorate of Education ('Staat van het Onderwijs 2022'p 186-187) only 6% of bachelors are offered in the English language. Therefore, with these statistics it is impossible that the reported heavy workload and overflowing classrooms are due to internationalisation or international students. Internationalisation and international students are being used a scapegoat for underlying structural problems (lack of funding) within higher education. The same applies to the housing crisis. International students cannot be blamed on the housing crisis. This is a societal long-term problem which is due to bad planning and lack of funding.

Inward Looking Approach: The bill proposes that the use of the English language is restricted and the use of the Dutch language is reinforced. English is the global lingua franca; Dutch is certainly not. It is factual that English is the language of science and business. Using English within higher education has nothing to do with anglicizing education, as commonly reported, but it about being able to communicate efficiently with one another and ensure that everyone is included. Universities of applied sciences and research universities offer English-taught and Dutch-taught bachelors, masters and elective minor courses that have a strong international orientation. We need international lectures to develop and teach these courses. They bring a fresh diverse mindset and approach to developing these courses. If we only have Dutch lecturers developing and teaching these courses, we take a very inward looking/mono cultural approach to the education we offer and lose out on the fresh diverse perspectives that these international lecturers and scientists offer.

Dutch Language being Oppressed: I have also read news articles and even a response on the consultation that "the Dutch language is being oppressed" and even comparing Dutch to the Irish language being oppressed. I am Irish and I can say 100% that the Dutch language cannot

be compared to the Irish language in such a context. Unlike Ireland, the Netherlands has not and is not being oppressed, people are not being forced to speak English. In Ireland, the British tried to eradicate the Irish culture and language by force. This is not happening in the Netherlands. Students choose to study in English and either way the majority of courses offered in Higher Education are still offered in the Dutch language. Although I have Dutch (dual) citizenship and I was not born in the Netherlands, I have been living here a long time and have Dutch family and friends and my children were born here and go to Dutch school and I can tell you, from this experience of being immersed in Dutch culture, the Dutch language is alive and kicking within Dutch society and is definitely not being oppressed in any way.

Dutch students being pushed out: Minister Dijkgraaf claims in his letter introducing the bill that “various English-taught courses are threatening to become less accessible to Dutch students”. However, this statement does not apply to universities of applied sciences where we do not have capacity or accessibility problems. From my research, this only happens in very exceptional cases within certain popular English-taught courses at certain universities in which entry is based on an entry test. Students who get the highest results on the entry test secure a place on the programme. If more international students apply to these programmes and do well on the entry test, more international students gain access to the programme. Again, this only happens within certain popular English-taught programmes, within certain universities, not all, and not within universities of applied sciences. Sweeping statements that suggest that Dutch students are being pushed out by international students, creates animosity and anti-foreigner/anti-international narratives. These statements rile the public into believing that this is a general problem that is happening throughout higher education and all Dutch students are being treated unfairly, which is not the case.

Where is Inclusion in all of this? Inclusive education was not mentioned or referred to once in the current bill put forward by the government. If we only speak Dutch, we are excluding our current international colleagues and students who don’t speak Dutch or don’t speak it so well. Learning Dutch doesn’t happen overnight, it takes years and years of practice. Expecting Dutch students and staff to have an understanding of Dutch before they come here or even a passive understanding within a year or two is unrealistic. In addition, the Netherlands is a multicultural country. The Netherlands with its history of colonialism, its large-scale efforts to recruit migrants for labour shortages in the 1970s and 80s and its beneficial tax regimes which have attracted international companies, accompanied by many international employees, is extremely multicultural. There are many people in the Netherlands who have Dutch citizenship, like me and my children, but who have very diverse cultural backgrounds. This also applies to our “Dutch” students who also have Dutch citizenship and speak Dutch fluently, but some have diverse cultural backgrounds. From teaching these students, and making use of the multicultural classroom before me, I know Dutch it is not always their first language and some don’t even identify as being Dutch. By enforcing this bill and sending out the message that the Dutch language is the “main priority”, you send out the message that the culture and language of these students is unimportant. By not valuing the array of cultural diversity within the Netherlands, it will only lead to further segregation and animosity within Dutch society. This diversity should be embraced and valued. The Dutch language should not be used a tool to either exclude students or to keep international students out of the Netherlands.

To conclude, if this bill is to be passed in its current state and if internationalisation and English-taught courses are to be cut back even further, it will affect Dutch students' intercultural learning, we will have fewer international educators and scientists working at our universities and it will have damaging consequences on international cooperation and on the labour shortage. With the rise of so much hatred and division within society, at the time we need to invest even more intercultural learning definitely not less.