Teaching and Learning through the Eyes of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Postgraduates and their Lecturers in Australia and Vietnam: Implications for the Internationalisation of Education in Australian Universities

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International and transnational education has become common place. Australian universities have embraced the rise in international enrolments from students in the Asia-Pacific region. There are many considerations, however, if these courses are to avoid being labelled neo-colonial exercises, not least of which is the necessity for informed dialogue about practices and beliefs in teaching and learning between all stakeholders. With this in mind, this paper draws on a larger study which examined the teaching and learning experiences and perspectives of a group of culturally and linguistically diverse postgraduates and lecturers from the Asian continent and Australia. All of the participants were involved in an MA program offered by an Australian university and all were, or had been, English language teachers. Findings indicated that while participants from Vietnam, China, Indonesia, Taiwan, Japan, India, Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia all appreciated (to some extent) educational discourses imported from 'the West', many of them also valued local educational discourses and felt that these latter discourses were often viewed as 'different' at best or 'deficit' at worst by educators and academics outside of their locality. The implications of these findings for universities involved in international and transnational education are discussed with recommendations focusing on the need to develop more metacultural sensitivity on the part of university academics (both fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) and home), greater appreciation by home universities of diversity in stakeholders' perspectives on teaching and learning and increased respect for, and confidence in, local expertise in the Asia-Pacific region.

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Introduction

In the last forty years the world has embarked upon the internationalisation of higher education' (Knight, 2004, 2008) or 'policies and programs that universities and governments implement to respond to globalization' (Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley, 2009, p. 7). These have been either 'at home' or 'abroad' (transnational programs (TNE) (Knight, 2004, p. 17). In 2009, around 52% of Asian students stated that they were bound for international destinations (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2011, p. 327). Australia received students from China (18.2%), India (7.3%), Malaysia (1.9%), and Vietnam (1.5%) (OECD, 2011). At the same time, 80,458 (24.2%) of the 332,577 international students studying in Australian institutions of higher education, were enrolled offshore in transnational programs in Singapore, China, Malaysia, Vietnam and Hong Kong.

This rise in international and transnational education provision has raised many considerations for university course providers. A key issue has been approaches to teaching and learning in the delivery and content of courses, especially those courses focused on teacher education. This paper seeks to highlight the beliefs and practices of several groups of students and lecturers involved in a postgraduate course at an Australian university. One of these groups consisted of culturally and linguistically diverse English language teachers from the wider geographic area of Asia (the word ''Asian" has widespread currency but it needs to be used carefully as it can presume a homogeneity and commonality of people who, in fact, have very diverse national, racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, and class backgrounds (Matthews, 2002)). Another group comprised local lecturers at an offshore site and a third group was fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) lecturers at the home university. The paper describes the experiences and beliefs of these groups and then discusses the implications of these findings for international and transnational education in the Asia-Pacific region. It needs to be noted that the terms "West", "Western",

"non-Western" and "Eastern" are used in this study to allow a clear argument to be made. There is little choice but to use these commonly understood meta-geographical terms and to some extent, this East/West binary is inescapable. The terms can also be helpful in providing mutual ontological interpretation of unfamiliar cultures (Eoyang, 1994). However, there is no doubt that these labels are problematic in their unchallenged and simplistic nature. They do not reflect the complexity of the situation and this is acknowledged by the writer.

Related literature

 A considerable amount of literature has evaluated teaching and learning in university contexts where there are culturally and linguistically diverse students originating from countries in Asia. These contexts have been home university contexts or transnational contexts. An underlying theme in the literature has been the need for 'transformative encounters' in universities, and learning which is 'mutually engaging and interculturally inclusive' (Sanderson, 2003, p. 150). This requires the development of greater metacultural sensitivity amongst home university and FIFO academics; respect for diversity in educational discourses; the formation of communities of practice across borders; the alleviation of culture shock or dissonance for both students and FIFO lecturers and the need to create confidence in the capacity of local lecturers not only to deliver Australian university courses effectively but to be involved in the planning of those courses. All of these issues pervade the experiences of participants in the study from which this paper was drawn and form a backdrop to the investigation into the teaching and learning experiences and perspectives of culturally and linguistically diverse postgraduates and lecturers from Asia and Australia which are explained in more detail below.

Literature on metacultural sensitivity has drawn attention to rhetoric which promotes Western knowledge as the 'apex of civilization' and non-Western knowledge as the "Other"

(Sanderson, 2003, p. 150). Researchers have suggested that there is a need for commitment to 'cultural adaptation by all who are involved' and a 'more culturally pluralistic perspective from staff and local students' (Sanderson, 2003, p. 145). Some (Bowser, Danaher & Somasundaram, 2007, p. 678) have endorsed the notion of respect for "difference", while others (Grace & Gravestock, 2009, p. 20) have encouraged lecturers to 'pause for thought' in order to avoid stereotyping their interactions with people from other ethnicities. Most are agreed that an increasingly globalised world demands knowledge and awareness of diversity (Milner, 2010) and heightened metacultural sensitivity (Louie, 2005) if the 'pedagogic action' is to represent everyone and not just the interests of the dominant players (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 9).

Literature has also concluded that international and transnational students and local lecturers in the Asia-Pacific region have sometimes been viewed through a deficit lens (Chapman & Pyvis, 2006; Dunn & Wallace, 2004, 2006b, 2008; Kanu, 2005; Leask, 2004; Manathunga, 2005; Seah & Edwards, 2006). More recently, this has changed in some instances to what has been called 'a surplus model' (Chowdhury & Phan Le Ha, 2014, p. 10), with multinational students from Asian countries attributed with superior attributes and greater 'cosmopolitanism and worldliness'. While appearing to be a move towards a more positive image, this shift is really only another form of culturalism.

Teacher education discourses sometimes promote the notion of an "ideal" learner and teacher across teaching and learning environments in the West (Hamachek, 1969; Rubin, 1975), creating hegemonies of social, cultural and ideological practices (Nozaki, 2009). Scrutiny of these views in later years (Murphy, Delli & Edwards, 2004) has drawn attention to the presence of dominant discourses in teacher education (Moore, 2004). From a Foucauldian perspective, these discourses are not neutral but instilled with a desire to control, shape and Other any practices or

perspectives not in tune with dominant Western beliefs (Foucault, 1980; Said, 1978).

Development of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), in which students and teachers can learn from each other, has been endorsed, but the difficulty of establishing these communities across borders is a common topic in the literature. Communities of practice usually develop naturally when people work together in the same physical space (Wenger, 1998) but such communities are often constrained in transnational educational situations (Dunn & Wallace, 2006b) because they are transient and may consist of students from many different countries, all of whom will return to their own countries once the face-to-face component of their course is completed. Malaysia is one such education hub. Students from Brunei, Canada, China, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Mozambique, Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore come together for transnational programs offered by Australian universities (Chapman & Pyvis, 2013). Students enrol in these courses because they want to experience a curriculum with an international perspective (Dixon & Scott, 2004) or construct an identity as an 'international person' (Chapman & Pyvis, 2006, p. 236) but may experience 'cultural dissonance' when they meet the new methods of delivery and assessment (Wang, 2008, p. 60). This dissonance has been documented alongside the shock that students can experience when arriving in a new country after leaving home (Furnham & Bochner, 1982, 1986; Pyvis & Chapman, 2005) and finding themselves at a university with different academic expectations.

Culture shock and dissonance are not experienced only by students. Academics from the home university (especially FIFO lecturers) may also experience dissonance as they are cut off from the community of practice with which they are familiar. Professional development programs may improve this situation. They may call into question views of teaching and learning (Leask, 2004, p.147). These programs are only useful if they promote ongoing discussion about educational and cultural discourses (Hicks & Jarratt, 2008), however, rather than being

"one-stop"' opportunities for information transfer. Leask (2004) suggested that some intercultural learning can occur simply by experiencing the contact zone but formalised sessions in planning and course review provide opportunities for both local and FIFO staff to work together as a team (Seah & Edwards, 2006). This is important because the 'most pervasive issue' for many researching in the field of transnational education is communication (Pannan and Gribble, 2005, p. 7). The latter is often impaired by 'workload, geography, national borders and institutional practices' that form barriers to the development of inclusive communities of practice (Dunn & Wallace, 2008, p. 250).

Offshore local lecturers experience a different set of issues. Leask (2004, p. 3) described local tutors, particularly those in Asia, as the 'ground force' – the people who come in after the 'airforce' to sort everything out. The status awarded to the onshore team eludes the local lecturers resulting in their low self-esteem. They are rarely involved in curriculum or assessment design. They can miss out on professional development and intercultural pedagogy or experience an insensitive approach when it is provided. Workshops can be a continuation of neo-colonial structures in which ideals are transferred wholesale to host contexts regardless of the 'cultural milieu', according to Kanu (2005). At its worst, offshore teacher education for local teachers can be predicated on the notion of developing Others (Manathunga, 2005). Local teachers may also be undervalued by their students who prefer home university lecturers (Dunn & Wallace, 2004; Seah & Edwards, 2006) because they assume that the quality of teaching by these lecturers will be higher (Chapman & Pyvis, 2006). The teaching and learning beliefs, practices and experiences of Vietnamese postgraduate students and their lecturers (both local and FIFO), and those of multinational postgraduates from many countries in Asia are embedded in the issues described above. This literature forms the backdrop to the responses of Australian universities to the internationalisation of teaching and learning in their courses.

The Study

The underlying theoretical premise of the study was that experiences and encounters in any teaching and learning context are the result of shared understandings between participants in these contexts. Teachers and learners do not merely take part in experiences and encounters but actively create them. The reality that is made is socially constructed (Berger & Luckman, 1966) and, as in this case, constructed from participants' contact with certain social and theoretical discourses as well as 'the reality of everyday life shared with others' (Berger & Luckman, 1966, p. 43). Experiences and beliefs about teaching and learning of students and academics involved in international and transnational courses have implications for the delivery of transnational postgraduate programs in Asia, and onshore postgraduate programs which have culturally and linguistically diverse students enrolled, because they address perceived notions of "good" learning and teaching.

Data for the study was collected using a qualitative, interpretivist interactionist approach and semi-structured, individual, face to face interviews. Participants comprised four groups of people:

1. a group of ten multinational postgraduates (six females and four males between the ages of 20 and 50) from China, Indonesia, Japan, Bangladesh, India, Taiwan, Vietnam and Saudi Arabia, all enrolled on the MA Applied Linguistics course, resident in Australia and English language teachers in their own countries;

2. a group of ten Vietnamese postgraduates (eight females and two males between the ages of 20 and 30), all English language teachers resident in Vietnam and enrolled on the same MA course through a partner institution in Vietnam;

3.   three local Vietnamese lecturers on the MA course and resident in Vietnam(two men and one woman aged 40-60);

4.   six FIFO lecturers on the MA Applied Linguistics course resident in Australia (three women and three men aged 50-65), four of whom were first or second generation Australians with British, Italian and Zimbabwean origins, one of whom was Malaysian and one of whom was a seventh generation Australian.

Interview questions prompted participants to talk about their experiences as teachers or learners while reflecting upon the influence of Western educational discourses, notions of the 'good' teacher/ learner and teaching and learning in the Asia-Pacific region.

Data were analysed using an approach described by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 4) as 'transcendental realism' in which data is coded and grouped according to common themes. Policy documents, background documents, teaching resources, and related primary texts and literature were used to corroborate the interview data. The following themes emerged in the responses of the postgraduates and their lecturers.

The profile of a good teacher

Views held by all postgraduates in the study included the notion of a "good teacher" as patient, flexible, knowledgeable, dedicated and caring with good communication skills but not necessarily linguistically perfect.   Humour, flexibility, commitment and responsiveness to the needs of learners were valued in the classroom. All of the postgraduate English language teachers felt that teachers should be in touch with students' efforts and progress and that students should be encouraged to have a voice and be independent. Good teachers, they claimed, are firm friends who convey knowledge about life and create an atmosphere in which

learners feel comfortable discussing their problems. One Indonesian onshore postgraduate said, 'I think the teacher is the one who can … teach something else that is good for their life… it is good for us to reflect … to learn something from the story …'. The Vietnamese onshore postgraduate felt that teachers needed to be conversant with student psychology in order to be effective in their roles as pastoral carers.

Both the postgraduates in the multinational group studying in Australia and the Vietnamese postgraduates resident in Vietnam described "good teaching" as a combination of "being", "knowing", "doing" and "giving". One Vietnamese postgraduate claimed it was important for teachers to make students 'love' them and cultivate a strong, empathic, open teacher/student relationship. The multinational group of postgraduate teachers promoted a philosophy of inclusivity and responsibility for guidance, not only in formal studies but in life generally. This perception of the teacher as moral guide and 'engineer of the soul' corroborates the findings of Vietnamese researchers Dung Hue Doan (2005) and Phan Le Ha (2008, p. 9). The notion of teacher as moral guide has been attributed to the influence of Confucianism by some (Nguyen Phuong Mai, Terlouw & Pilot, 2005; Tran, 2013; Yang, Zheng & Li, 2006) but, as Duong Thieu Thong (2002) pointed out, caring for individuals in the community and regard for harmony were core components of Taoism and Buddhism well before the arrival of Confucianism.

The concept of a "good teacher" was more elusive for FIFO lecturers in the study, however. They considered good teacher-student relationships important for effective learning and emphasised the need for teachers to respect their students but placed much more emphasis on 'doing' things that enable learners to learn. They did not emphasise the role of the teacher beyond the classroom.

Local versus imported approaches to teaching

As in studies by Chinn (2007) and Phan Le Ha (2004), all postgraduates in the study reported being influenced by what they saw as Western approaches to teaching and learning in their roles as English language teachers. They were 'inspired' to try different procedures which facilitated good teacher-student relationships and felt released from the monotony of traditional grammar-based approaches. Postgraduates in the multinational group studying in Australia were more appreciative of their local educational discourses than were their Vietnamese counterparts resident in Vietnam. They praised many aspects of their own educational systems. As one Japanese participant explained:

> I compare to Western teachers teaching style because for many years I taught with native speakers in the classroom and so I saw Western people teach in a classroom … if I found out a good points or good teacher's style … I tried to observe in my teaching style and then also I look at Japanese teachers teaching style and … in high school or Junior high school and in fact there are a lot of nice good Japanese teachers as well. So … both have a weakness ….both have strengths.

The Bangladeshi postgraduate praised the encouragement she had received to express herself and 'criticise a situation' back in Bangladesh (so long as she was 'respectful'). The Japanese participant praised Japanese text books for being 'well organised'. Some participants claimed to simply follow their own beliefs in teaching which involved teaching in the 'Asian way'.

The Vietnamese local lecturers recognised the value in their local educational practices and beliefs but also fully embraced the imported 'add on' pedagogy. They celebrated their ability to span what they saw as "Western" and "Eastern" educational discourses in what might be seen as a third space.

In contrast, FIFO lecturers were very reflective and reflexive. They criticised Western educational discourses as dominant

discourses and did not feel entirely comfortable with what they saw as the hegemony of Western approaches to teaching and learning. However, they did not express the desire to be more informed about alternative educational discourses such as those expressed by the other participants either.

The profile of a good learner

The importance of learners' personal characteristics was emphasised by all participants. Vietnamese postgraduates who were resident offshore in Vietnam, in particular, talked about the importance of student sociability and willingness to explore life. They emphasised the significance of student motivation, concentration and a sound work ethic. Good learners, they felt, are risk takers who take advantage of opportunities to learn, are not afraid of making mistakes, are well prepared and organised and invest time in learning. These learners listen, obey, ask questions, criticise, consolidate, memorise, review, record and learn in the way best suited to them but make time for play as well as work, using the community as a resource. Vietnamese lecturers were keen to describe "good learners" as possessing characteristics which help them both inside and outside the classroom.

The idea of an archetypal "good learner" was critiqued more rigorously by FIFO lecturers, however. They recognised that some students use learning strategies effectively or have personalities which predispose them to more successful learning but felt that such labelling simplified a very complex joint construction of learning. Their definitions of good learning did not extend so far outside the classroom as those of the onshore postgraduates and the Vietnamese postgraduates resident in Vietnam.

Verification, explanation and endorsement of local approaches to learning

Passivity (as perceived by the West) does not sit well with Western educational expectations, according to participants in the

study. Images of "Asian passivity" and inscrutableness hark back to Orientalist images identified by Said (1978). Postgraduates in the study ascribed passivity in their classrooms to factors such as: large numbers of students in classes in public school systems; teaching approaches and constraints; and level of language proficiency, including appropriate styles and registers. It could also be a bi-product of lack of student preparation or pre-reading before classes, lack of learner knowledge and ability in the different skills, classroom atmosphere, etiquette and dynamics, they claimed. Vietnamese postgraduates resident in Vietnam were more cynical about student classroom passivity and identified Vietnamese learner laziness as central to passivity in lessons. However, they did not feel as strongly as the multinational group that their students were always passive.

Participants conceded that their students were often reproductive learners, but did not see this as an inadequacy. They suggested that memorisation is used as part of a repertoire of strategies. As the Japanese postgraduate explained:

> I use both … .so depend on the subject or depend on …what I learn …so maybe sometimes I use rote memory and sometimes ... deep learning or discuss or talk with any other people … I think learning needs both … learning needs memorisation and also reflection.

Likewise, a reproductive style can be linked to subject area and level of schooling as well as limited second language contexts (memorisation is necessary for speakers of a second language who do not leave their home country). Memorisation does not usually preclude understanding either as described by one Vietnamese postgraduate resident in Australia:

> They try to memorise a lot of things from the materials … they also filter which part they should write on in the exam… that's a sign of understanding actually… some memorising with understanding.

It was agreed by most that there was a paucity of critical thinking in many learning environments in their countries, largely due to cultural notions of hierarchy and task types. However, participants also identified learner maturity, level of education, subject area, socio-economic status (distinguished by private or public school enrolment) and rural versus urban habitats as factors in determining the levels of critical thinking which might take place. Some also identified the teachings of Confucius as the source of these behaviours while Vietnamese offshore postgraduates voiced their conviction that some uncritical, reproductive work was necessary as a foundation for higher order learning. Participants claimed that students involved themselves in critical thinking when the topic was well known and understood, students were arranged into small groups and relationships between students were convivial.

The most unsettling aspect of the interviews in the study was the frequent intimation by postgraduates from both sites (but especially the Vietnamese postgraduates at the offshore site) that approaches to learning in many countries in Asia were deficit in some way. Participants described their countrymen and women as 'stuck in bad habits', especially learning habits, lacking in skills as teachers, linguistically inferior in terms of their command of English language and 'backward' (rural areas especially). On the more optimistic side, postgraduates also commented that learners in their countries were very skilled at adapting to new learning contexts.

FIFO lecturers seemed undecided in their observations of particular learning approaches amongst their students. On the one hand they critiqued the notion of an unreconstructed, static "Asian learner" and, on the other hand, they suggested that learning approaches in countries in Asia could be attributed to contextual, political, social and pedagogical factors. When it came to adapting material and delivery for culturally and linguistically diverse students offshore in Vietnam or onshore in Australia, FIFO lecturers claimed to do very little to change their material to suit

the cultural backgrounds of their students. They did, however, elaborate upon how they adjusted approaches and materials to suit the transnational context in Vietnam i.e. large classes, monolingual and monocultural groups, intensive mode of delivery, students all working two jobs and travelling long distances and meeting obligations to extended families. They were very mindful of issues of parity and standardisation across campuses.

Vietnamese local lecturers showed more evidence than the FIFO lecturers of having adapted materials and delivery to their Vietnamese MA students. They had added readings and examples specific to the region and Vietnam and adapted delivery to suit their particular group of students, in terms of student language level and interests. They appeared comfortable with the image of their students as rote-learning, passive and uncritical and ascribed such behaviours to external influences such as exams, teachers, syllabus, reluctance to take risks and a desire to retain an 'Asian' identity.

Mismatches between approaches and contexts

All of the participant postgraduate English language teachers talked about the pressure of teaching in ways prescribed by Western educational discourses, an issue raised by many previous researchers (Bax, 2003; Hallinger, 2010; Kam, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Meganathan, 2009). The Vietnamese participants who were resident offshore, in particular, attested to the existence of neo-colonialism in educational discourses exported wholesale to Asia (Nguyen Phuong Mai, Elliott, Terlouw, Albert & Pilot, 2009). They highlighted the lack of attention paid to the socio-cultural approach to teaching and learning proposed by Lantolf (2000). All postgraduates talked about their attempts to tread a path between adopting new methodologies promoted by Western teacher educators in their roles as English language teachers and keeping their identity as local English language teachers, a phenomenon referred to as 'one community, two systems' by Liu and Fisher (2010, p. 180). They

suggested that qualities of teaching valued by the West could be added to, or interpreted and practised, in different but equivalent ways in the East, an idea also espoused by Phan Le Ha (2004).

Local teaching and learning seen through a deficit lens

Postgraduates from both study sites confided that they felt trapped in a situation in which their teaching and learning approaches were not valued by the West. They suggested that their approaches are seen through the prism of Orientalist, essentialist and Postcolonial discourses. The Vietnamese postgraduates studying offshore felt particularly aggrieved about this. Lack of teaching confidence was mentioned by many Vietnamese participants resident in Vietnam.

The demand on time for most teachers, who work two jobs and raise families, militates against extensive professional development. Educators returning from courses conducted overseas feel uneasy about confidently espousing the new teaching methods in case they are seen to be devaluing their mentors. Very few studies have documented this phenomenon apart from some conducted in the 80s and 90s by Canagarajah (1993) and Pennycook (1989), in which the disequilibrium that can arise when TESOL teachers educated overseas return home with newly acquired ideas is described. Similar experiences have been documented by researchers such as Eilam (2002, p. 1693) who described the alienation that Israeli Arab teachers felt returning to their Arab communities, after "passing through" teacher education courses that had Western orientations.

All postgraduates talked about trying to 'fit in' with, or 'imitate' in some way, the new target culture, a phenomenon discussed by many other researchers (Chen & Shorte, 2010; Gu, 2011; Lewthwaite, 1996; Skyrme, 2007; Xu, 2007; Yu & Le, 2010). They felt that the role of the teacher as moral guide (Phan Le Ha, 2004, 2008) was incompatible with Western values and norms. Their biggest fear was losing face while learning; a disposition well documented in the literature (McBrien, 2005; Juhana, 2012;

Tani, 2005; Wachob, 2000; Wong, 2004). As one FIFO lecturer observed, loss of face can be more easily rectified by students in their own contexts and first language environments as they can resort to humour in situations where they have made themselves look ignorant. Asking questions to teachers was also deemed daunting by the postgraduates, with questions to foreign teachers more face-threatening than questions to same nationality teachers. One postgraduate attributed this fear to the greater perceived distance between students and their Western teachers despite teachers' attempts to encourage questioning and a more direct style of interaction. Fear of speaking out in English medium lessons is greater in learners who have low second language ability, according to a few of the postgraduates, corroborating findings by Pavlenko (2003) in which a Japanese postgraduate confided, 'I suspect that many Japanese people suffer from inferiority complex in English language' (p.264).

Feeling viewed as 'different'

Postgraduates talked about East and West as 'two different worlds' with 'distance' between them. One Vietnamese offshore postgraduate described these worlds as follows:

> In Western literature there are two elements that … are evil, but only one is the good… They are … more evil than good in Western literature… in Asian literature there is two good and one evil … I mean life is the same in the West and in Asia, but the way Asian people look at life is different from that…

Increased travel has narrowed this gap somewhat but there remains a sense of socio-cultural difference, despite greater interaction. Lecturers and students living and working abroad often remain trapped in these differences and develop a sense of feeling 'strange', according to the postgraduates. Such experiences have been comprehensively described by researchers (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006; Ward, Furnham & Bochner, 2001; Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Zhang & Brunton, 2007). In the study reported here, postgraduates studying in Australia especially claimed to feel

'different'. This sense of 'strangeness' ranged from feeling uneasy about things like the use of first names for lecturers, to feeling troubled about their own cultural norms in the presence of those who do not understand them. Some 'strangeness' arose from the fact that students were living alone for the first time. Equally, when Asian postgraduate students returned to their home countries they again experienced feelings of 'strangeness', a reverse culture shock frequently documented in the literature (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Gaw, 2000; Gudykunst & Mody, 2002) and attributed to breaks with one set of cultural and political norms/traditions and attempts to fit into a new set of norms.

Other differences that seemed marked were shyness and the emphasis placed on respect in many Asian countries, traits noted by several researchers (Chang & Sue, 2003; Juhana, 2012; Koydemir & Demir, 2008) and contrasted with the perceived forwardness and extroversion of Westerners. Such shyness was not seen as deficient behaviour by the postgraduates but merely culturally endorsed behaviour. Similarly, they spoke of daily hardship they experienced and the impact this had on approaches to teaching and learning as well as the significance of the teaching institution (public or private) for the type of teaching and learning experienced. Approaches to teaching and learning in the public sector and rural areas are, by necessity, more traditional with memorisation encouraged above oral communication. Students in private schools, on the other hand, often receive tuition which utilises the latest Western approaches, either in their home country or overseas, from well-paid teachers in the cities.

Another difficult issue to deal with was plagiarism, they claimed; a much documented phenomenon in the literature on approaches to learning found in many countries in Asia and a problem for students enrolled in Western higher education courses (Dung Hue Doan, 2005; Leask, 2006; Liu, 2005; Phan Le Ha, 2006; Sowden, 2005). Postgraduates found the concept 'hard to comprehend' as regulations in their own countries were not so 'strict'. The discussion of this issue requires a paper on its own, however, and

is raised here only as an example of issues to be dealt with by receiving institutions.

Changing views and practices? A one-way street?

Many of the Vietnamese postgraduates and lecturers were convinced that change is taking place rapidly in certain parts of Asia. They felt that teachers in their countries were entering the Third Space in terms of educational discourses. Such change was referred to by Mahbubani (1998), a Singaporean academic, as a new self-assurance stemming from rapid economic development in East Asia and a 'cultural confidence' and optimism born out of educational excellence (Mahbubani, 2008). Like Mahbubani, postgraduate students in the study claimed they were now questioning and taking part in informed criticism, although those enrolled in courses onshore in Australia were much less convinced of this and saw change occurring only in more affluent, urban, private educational settings.

FIFO lecturers in the study had mixed views. Some were confident that change was taking place in Australian universities. One, however, felt that there was a long way to go:

> I mean…it affects me at work because I work with colleagues who tend to think that Asians have got some kind of thing about them which is different and needs kind of pressing into a more Western mold in terms of study skills and all that kind of stuff and … in terms of other stuff… there's another side to it…

Change was seen as a one-way street. Culturally and linguistically diverse students and lecturers adapt themselves to Western discourses, and develop multiple identities. The Australian public and even Australian academics, however, remain for the most part monolingual and uneducated about most of the countries in Asia, corroborating observations made by leading Indonesian spokesperson Dewi Fortuna Anwar, the Senior Advisor to Indonesian Vice President Boediono, in a recent telecast from Jakarta of the Australian program Q & A (McEvoy, 2013).

Implications for Australian universities

Overall, it was apparent in the case study from which these findings were drawn that multinational postgraduate students and their lecturers are making many different meanings from their teaching and learning experiences in the region (as would be expected when contexts are so diverse within Asia and within individual countries in Asia). However, they also have some common experiences. While they share an appreciation of teaching and learning discourses emanating from the West, they find it difficult to put this theory into practice a lot of the time. There is, as a result, certain unease (or at the very least feelings of 'difference') amongst them. The presence of factors preventing them from teaching or learning in ways suggested by the dominant discourse, create feelings of insufficiency. As English language teachers they try to adopt new methodologies promoted by Western teacher educators while at the same time retaining their identity and valuing local approaches to teaching and learning. In places like Vietnam, in particular, teachers are commonly seen as role models for life outside the classroom, as well as guardians and moral guides. Their job is to make students love them. Learning is also focused on performing roles which extend beyond the classroom with less focus placed by teachers on learners 'doing' than 'being'.

The question is whether Australian universities are considering all of these potential tensions when planning and executing transnational programs in Asia or in onshore courses. Are they aware of the diversity of teaching and learning experiences amongst their international students and local lecturers? Do they value the expertise and knowledge that students and lecturers from the Asia-Pacific region bring to teaching and learning? Are they doing enough to prepare both students and their lecturers (both FIFO and home university academics) for education across borders?

The Response of one Australian University

The university in this case study has attempted to address some of these issues. Initiatives include mandatory cross-cultural 'one-stop' education workshops for lecturers involved in transnational programs and the inclusion of Eastern belief systems in training workshops in ethics. To support learning, policy on cross-cultural diversity has been formulated with a focus on pastoral care for students arriving from other countries, including the creation of 'hubs' where students can work and socialise in an attempt to set up communities of practice. The university also recognises the need for ongoing English language and study skills support for students and the requirements of TEQSA (Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency, 2013) for students to be able to speak and write the English language to a level in which they can communicate effectively while completing their university studies.

There is some way to go, however. Little consideration is given to the diversity of backgrounds from which international students from the Asia-Pacific region derive when discussing approaches to teaching and learning. Conversations conducted around these students rarely take into account socio-economic status, type of schooling prior to entering the university course (public or private), place of residence in their own countries (rural or urban), work schedules, the hardships of daily life, cultural norms such as "shyness", culture shock and the implications of all of this for approaches to learning. In Australian universities, good teaching and learning are measured by what happens in the classroom or online rather than the lecturer's ability to be a moral guide for life. Lecturers do not expect that their students will love them.

The education of lecturers and university personnel about the Asia-Pacific region has not been improved by the university's initiative to reduce its Asian Studies department from four programs (Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Indonesian) to minimal offerings in just two programs. This reflects similar moves in universities across Australia, with many Asian languages and

history units closing down, facts discussed by academic Greg McCarthy in a Radio National forum (Doogue, 2013). Ironically, the demise of Asian Studies programs comes at a time when one in six students at Australian universities comes from a country located in the Asia-Pacific region (Doogue, 2013), highlighting a mismatch between the need for cross-cultural expertise and intercultural competence and the response of universities generally. FIFO lecturers, hence, can still experience dissonance upon arrival offshore in culturally and linguistically different contexts unless, like those lecturers in applied linguistics described in this study, they have lived and worked abroad for substantial parts of their lives. More recently, the university in question has encouraged application for monies from the Australian government for the New Colombo Plan Mobility Program (Australian Government, 2014) to enable undergraduate students to spend one semester studying in an Asian country of their choice. These are encouraging signs.

Offshore university transnational programs often relegate local lecturers to minimal roles (if any). The transnational program featured in this article recognises and makes use of the expertise of offshore local lecturers in Vietnam but, despite this, they remain on the receiving end of material and planning. Vietnamese lecturers in the study do not help plan or suggest input for the content of the Master's units. This is partly due to university academics' fear of not meeting "standards" and partly a lack of confidence (both by the university and the local lecturers themselves) in the abilities of the local lecturers. As seen in the discussion with participants in the study, there is much change taking place in education in the Asia-Pacific region, with students increasingly questioning and taking part in informed criticism. However, this is again context dependent (in this case, it was the Vietnamese postgraduates in Vietnam who felt this way). Many of the other multinational postgraduates were much less convinced of such change. They saw it occurring only in more affluent, urban, private educational settings in certain Asian countries. FIFO lecturers felt this change was all 'one way', with culturally and

linguistically diverse students and lecturers adapting themselves to Western educational discourses, developing multiple identities and entering the Third Space, while Australian academics remained for the most part outside this space.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Promotion of enhanced links with Asia is central to the recommendations proposed by the latest White Paper, Australia in the Asian century (Australian Government, 2012, p. 162) in which there was a call for 'more specialised Asia-relevant capabilities', employment 'across regional borders', 'a more general understanding of the region' and an exchange of ideas and resources in best practice teaching. Australian universities need to reflect upon their engagement with Asia if the internationalisation of education in the Asia-Pacific region is to be successful. Capabilities need to be developed in the following ways.

Firsthand experience of many educational contexts

In the study reported in this paper, nearly all of the FIFO lecturers had lived and worked abroad as English language teachers at some point in their careers. Although not in Asia, these experiences gave them insights into diverse teaching and learning contexts and enabled them to move away from the idea of Australians as 'liberating' teachers and students from their own local educational discourses (Alderton & Glaskin, 2013). Such a scenario is not the norm, however, in other parts of the university. Knowledge of other discourses and practices in the Asia-Pacific region, therefore, might best be achieved by all Australian academics spending greater periods of time on the Asian continent living and working in different countries, cultures and contexts as well as becoming more familiar with educational practices common to the region (Doogue, 2013). It is unrealistic to expect academics to suddenly see themselves as 'moral guides' or to involve themselves in the guidance of their students outside of the university but at least an awareness of the context from which

their multinational Asian students derive will build intercultural competence, greater empathy and understanding on the part of academics. In addition, as espoused by Greg McCarthy, the Head of Social Sciences at the University of Adelaide, ways of ensuring some familiarity with an Asian language need to be considered, even if it means insisting that all postgraduates take a government funded Asian language unit as part of their degree (Doogue, 2013); the reasoning here being that these postgraduates may be the academics of the future. FIFO lecturers working offshore could use these opportunities to be involved in dialogue about diversity in educational discourses (including discussion of the circumstances surrounding different approaches, and the nuanced role that these approaches might play) and then feed this learning back to home university academics.

Knowledge of Self and Other: Metacultural sensitivity

Findings in this study confirmed that it is important for lecturers in Australian universities, whether they be FIFO or home university academics, to be aware of diverse social and theoretical discourses, knowledge of Self and Other. They need to be informed about the historical, religious, cultural, economic and political contexts of students arriving from countries in the Asia-Pacific region. For example, the longstanding view that surface learning can automatically be traced back to Confucian beliefs might be re-considered in light of the influence of other major belief systems with Confucius recast as a promoter of critical thinking (Confucius 11:4) except when there has not been extensive preparatory knowledge (Confucius 7:28, 16:2) (Lau, 1979). FIFO and home university lecturers might be able to operate more effectively in two worlds, like the students and local lecturers in this study, if they were armed with knowledge of Western grand theories and narratives, as well as metacultural awareness. As one Saudi Arabian student in the study commented, everyone in the university needs an understanding of these theories and narratives if they are to develop deep intercultural competence. Informed views will help avoid the overplaying of

the "culture card" and focus attention, instead, on the construction of tasks, teacher competence, appreciation of student backgrounds and learner English language proficiency. More knowledge will help university staff to differentiate between cultural influences and the influences of the corporate world and, in particular, the new corporate university. A more socio-cultural approach to teaching and learning (Lantolf, 2000) could be adopted.

Dialogue, two-way learning, respect and inclusive communities of practice across borders

Tim Harcourt, a Fellow in Economics at the University of New South Wales, and guest on Radio National's program Mongrel Nation: The Asian Century predicted Australia's role in educating the future leaders of Asia (Soutphommasane, 2013). There needs to be a corollary to this, however, and that is Australians being educated by Asia. Greater appreciation of the fact that students and teachers in Asia may be managing 'one community, two systems' (Liu and Fisher, 2010, p. 180) may facilitate respect for local approaches to teaching and learning. In this study FIFO lecturers expressed concern for maintaining parity and standards across borders but this should not be a barrier to the integration of local content and expertise into courses being offered offshore. As Pannan and Gribble (2005) outlined, communication is paramount in transnational education. Formalised sessions in planning and course review could provide opportunities for both local and FIFO staff to work together as a team (Seah & Edwards, 2006). As a result, respect for local expertise might not be limited to the practitioner level but involve a two way exchange at the development stage, with a move away from the idea of local lecturers offshore being only the 'ground force' (Leask, 2004, p.3) . Such dialogue might keep the process of developing values and worldviews alive (Hamston, 2000).

The internationalisation of education in Australian universities is important for many reasons, not least of which is the economic benefit of engagement in international and transnational education.

Another bi-product of education across borders might be greater intercultural competence in the region which, in turn, may result in improved social cohesion and more mutual respect amongst the increasingly diverse community within Australia. However, much university transnational and international education is still pursuing neo-colonial models in teaching and learning and neglecting the rich resource that such crossing of borders can provide. Increased dialogue between all stakeholders might avert such lost opportunities.

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