AN HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE ON INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION: DOES INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA PROMOTE A PHILOSOPHICALLY DEFENSIBLE MODEL OF EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE?

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International Education can be viewed as a finger on the pulse of the world of international relations. It provides a view of where we are heading as a global community. By looking at how it is unfolding within our own shores of Australia, we can gauge how far we as a player on the world stage, have come in meeting the goals of education. Philosophy of Education is a core component of teacher training through which these goals, and the beliefs and values which underpin them, are espoused and clarified. September 11 was a call for timely self-reflection on what these beliefs and values are and whether or not they are advancing the goals of education in any real and meaningful sense. The future of the planet may depend on it. The method employed in the study is a phenomenological assessment of the issues based on critical reflection, case study and action research. The particular focus of discussion is international nursing education. An holistic, connectivist "network" model of education is proposed for the future founded on core values and community building.

Introduction

"The value of knowledge is tested by its power to purify and ennoble life, and …to apply the theoretical knowledge acquired… to the evolution of character and to the helping of fellow-men" (Annie Besant, 1906)

When knowledge ceases to inspire the mind, quicken the heart and capture imagination with a certain mystery, then it is time to scrutinize the present, revisit the past and construct a new vision for the future. The question we might ask is if what we are doing as international educators ennobles both the teacher and the student and advances the cause of civilisation. In 2002, Australia's universities had one in five full fee paying foreign students and it was becoming apparent that Australia would take a leading role in global education. It is referred to as Australia's "international student market". However rosy the picture may seem, the realities are declining staff-student ratios, marginal funding, contract and casual appointments, rising managerialism, low morale and a failure to live up to the demands of "internationalisation" which is to integrate an intercultural dimension into teaching, research and service (Welch, 2002). "A productive balance between its commercial and educational objectives" is certainly called for (Margison, 2002).

In my experience of international education spanning twenty-five years, this question is at the very heart of self-reflection. Its movement is heading in a direction that is not informed by society's highest ideals. Post-Vietnam humanitarianism welcomed refugees and extended a certain "noblesse oblige" towards remedying the neglect of earlier waves of migrants and a redress for the racism of the "white Australia policy". Together with a new- found "multi-cultural" consciousness, they were exciting times for an English as a Second Language "ESL" teacher. Over subsequent years, with the diminution of funding, impositions of language and money barriers to migrant entry, the continuing goaling of refugees and the institutionalising of international education as revenue-generating "big business", one can see how the values of economic rationalism, scientific materialism and global competition drive international education today. It operates very much on a model of difference and separateness whose means are purely instrumental, the parts thinking only of themselves and not connecting to the whole nor existing in the feedback loop of a universal mutuality. The Colombo Plan still operates today as "virtual" and "off-shore" (Pearce, 2003). Is it not possible to apply the same benevolent vision, idealism and value orientation to our on-shore

programmes? The instrumentalism of international education, however, speaks in terms of market forces, net profit, economic viability, and of supply and demand. Students are the consumers of education and education has little to do with the "person" of the consumer or the supplier for that matter. Herein lies the perpetuation of a duality educational philosophers driving pedagogical innovation argued polemically against for the last hundred years.

Dewey (1916) believed that dualisms in philosophy had created a number of forced dichotomies particularly of the individual and the world, the material and the spiritual, and between the cognitive and affective dimensions of students' development, knowledge and values. According to Dewey, these dichotomies led to the development of institutions that enacted dualistic values and structures to serve the interests of power and privilege in democratic societies. The end result necessarily, is that education causes harm by preventing healthy learning through hampering the learner's ability to draw on all resources including experience, emotions and intuition.

Nothing has changed in the hundred years since Dewey. Education today certainly needs to address the apparent disconnection between what people learn and how they live both as autonomous beings and as members of a larger community to which they are accountable through promoting global citizenship, social responsibility and moral commitment. Fifteen years later we hear a similar message about Australian education (McInnis, 2001). A body of literature cited by Kezar and Rhodes (2001) describes educational institutions' disengagement from public concerns and a lack of civic consciousness as rooted in a disregard of the affective dimension. Outcomes such as self-confidence, social responsibility, self-esteem, personal efficacy and civic-mindedness are considered as secondary goals, if considered at all, as are the cognitive values of critical reflection and new ways of thinking about the social world and one's part in it.

Self, department and institutional reflection is the first step in any model of education for the future. Upon reflecting, we might find how we perpetuate the dichotomies in our approaches to teaching and how we are hampered by institutional policies. Many staff meetings I attended in the past, were dominated by discussions on ways to generate further income by more aggressive marketing strategies or offering more courses so our international students could pay more money. We were warned not discuss "sensitive" subjects like politics, religion or the emotional and spiritual lives of our students for fear of transgressing cultural boundaries. So we perpetuate a compartmentalised view of education where the student is a "persona non grata", a statistic, an income unit whose only need is an intellectual one, its end to serve the larger corporate one, the money-making machine. Thus we relegate education to

"the world of matter" while consciousness is subsumed beneath a spirit-less instrumentality. A vision for the future of international education is what we have known all along but chosen to ignore. It is about caring and having the human person behind the student number validated.

Core Issues

No other category of education could best fit a vision for its future than international education which carries with it everywhere it exists, the essence of "globalisation". According to the working document "Globalisation and Catholic Higher Education" (2004), a major concern is how to keep values at the centre in the commercialisation that characterises the internationalisation of higher education especially the core value of serving the common good. Knowledge has become a marketable commodity jealously guarded instead of shared for the advancement of civilisation. Education providers in the wealthy countries maintain the control over the process of knowledge creation thereby perpetuating the polarisation of wealth and poverty. We know that most international students who now come to Australia today undergo great sacrifice and hardship. The sad reality is that many of them do not want to return to their countries of origin and we facilitate this through the merit system of the citizenship process which effectively culls other countries' brightest young stars by giving points for youth, education in this country, and marketable qualifications. In this way we contribute to the 'brain drain" from countries that can ill-afford it. It is true that employment shortfalls in western countries can be met by foreign-trained people but the reality is that the surplus in home countries is mostly in sought after positions while poor and rural areas remain unserviced thus contributing to the growing divide between the rich and the poor. The push-pull effect underlying international migration of technical and professional people issues from a disparity in the levels of socio-economic development between the countries involved (Xu, 2003).

The question Pope John Paul 11 asks of education today is how to preserve "the inalienable dignity of the human person" and how to "present a complete and transcendent vision of the human person … (that) educates people's consciences" (Globalisation and Catholic Higher Education, 2004, p.10). "Globalisation", coined in the 1940s refers to "intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (Giddens, cited by Zungolo & Corcoran, 2002). This term however, "cannot be reduced to a mere economic expression of growing interdependence and international agreements in an exclusively market-oriented and competitive environment" (p.11). It is all too easy to forget and forgo the individual human

cargo that goes with the movement of commodities, capital and information across borders. All too soon and sadly, we may see this flow overtaken by information technology and the mass production of education which further shrinks the basis for genuine human contact. Research is only now coming out that online student drop-out rates are higher than sixty percent. New on-line schools are becoming bankrupt because virtual learning is no substitute for the personal relationships of the real classroom: “Even with the best technology, it will always need the human touch to be effective” (Boser, 2003, p.3). Gunn and Recker (2001) failed to find tangible evidence “that students are willing to trade a coherent educational program enriched with the social and cultural experience of university life for the convenience of flexi-learning” (p.111).

The case study of Mac and of the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) class included in this paper, demonstrate the very unique problems and daily struggles faced by international students. It has been difficult at times to nurture compassion and even good sense particularly when it comes to underage students coming here and being educated without due consideration to their emotional, spiritual, moral and cultural development. These dimensions are not included in our curricula in any meaningful sense. It is also difficult to maintain the commitment and responsibility of “in loco parentis” when these students live in “homestays”. The motivation of the home providers outside of organisations like Rotary or AFS, like that of the educating institutions, is economically-driven and so there is a conflict of interest to be parent and provider of a commodity. This is why the title of this paper is a question. No philosophical argument can avoid the question of morality and how to morally defend our practice if by morality we mean adhering to the principles of right and seeking only to do what promotes the common good. The question is how we define “right” and whose “common good” are we thinking of? I no longer have much to do with students like Mac or EAP classes but as an academic adviser to international students who enter university nursing programmes, there are significant commonalities.

Method

A critical reflection of my own career as an educator in migrant, refugee and international student programmes and host to some fifty international students, inspired me to write this paper. I have English as a Second Language (ESL) and mainstream teaching experience in a wide variety of secondary and tertiary contexts in several states of Australia and overseas countries. Given that my current work is with international and migrant nursing students, issues that concern nursing education are emphasized but they do typify concerns for international students in general. I have recorded in professional diaries and a number of

papers mostly not submitted for publication, my views on and research into ESL teaching and learning problems as they arose on the job and have presented them in this paper together with a review of the relevant literature.

Mac demonstrates the human face of international education. The case study in full is given as an appendix since it is too long for the body of the paper but is vitally important to the argument presented and may make for interesting reading. The EAP class questionnaire is also included because it demonstrates the kind of action research regularly carried out when resistant or perplexing problems occurred.

Identifying the Problems

The problem with international education outlined by Cook and Cullen (2000) is that diversity in education is widespread, "but its acceptance is another story". International students bring to the classroom many different ideas and ideals. A lack of valuing of the diversity of the classroom arises as a challenge for both staff and local students who often bemoan the extra burdens placed on them because of their presence. Marginson (2002) suggests it is pure rhetoric to say international education in Australia fosters cultural exchange. The ideal is that foreign student education here will strengthen our ties with source countries but research shows that Australians expect foreigners to adjust to them which does not make for good friendships. There is the view that everyone has to be treated equally without concession to the fact that foreign students are way behind the starting block of Australian students (Smart, Volet & Ang, (2000).. In addition, like American universities, Australia's remain essentially Anglo-American in form and content. Another point raised is that international education here does not promote across-the-board internationalization since mainland Chinese students now form the majority who unlike their middle-class Southeast Asian neighbours, present with many more problems. As Marginson (2002) says: "The deeper pedagogical consequences of a large international student population have yet to be faced". Some of these are outlined in the following review of literature.

Griffiths and Tagliareni (1999) say international nursing students are marginalised, with neither the university nor the faculty wishing to take responsibility for their needs. These needs as identified by Ryan (2003) include socialisation to the nursing role, language and communication skill, workplace competence, and personal and social adjustment. Scanlan, Care & Gessler (2001) maintain that when such needs are not being met, issues of justice arise due to power differentials. These students are permitted entry on the basis of IELTS or some other score and then fail to meet minimum expectations for academic or clinical

performance or suffer physically, emotionally and mentally attempting to bridge the gap between competence and expectation. With pressures on governments like America and Australia to find and train nurses wherever and however they can due to a shortage in developed countries and an oversupply in countries like mainland China, the potential for harm is magnified both for the students, their peers and lecturers, and for the community entrusted to their care (Ryan, 2003; Xu, 2003).

Griffiths and Tagliareni (1999) list poor retention, lack of persistence, minimal academic integration and variable academic success as the markers of international nursing students being "at risk" and "disadvantaged". Those who make the grade in spite of not because of our education system, are testimonies to their personal qualities of resilience, determination, and dedication. Griffiths and Tagliareni's (1999) research on these students' perceptions reveals that interactions with faculty are seen as among the most important determinants of academic success and personal factors such as poor sense of self, low academic interest and lack of family support, as the greatest barriers to that success. The literature on "culture shock" lists symptoms of stress due to cultural, professional and psychological dissonance (Ryan, 2003). Isolation, alienation, loneliness, self-doubt, poor self-esteem, mistrust, frustration, helplessness, anxiety, racism, pressures of part-time work, inadequate academic preparation and failure to access support services add to the complex picture first identified by Oberg in the 1950s (cited in Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004). There are also problems of perceived insensitivity, indifference, and negativity, even hostility from faculty and other students (Kosowski, 2001). All subjects in Kosowski's (2001) study reported that they did not find the classroom nor the clinical setting to be environments conducive to nurses caring for each other. Chapdelaine & Alexitch's (2004) study supports research that rather than cultural differences being the cause of culture shock, individuals' feelings of a lack of well-being in the host culture derive from an inability to interact effectively with host members. Ying's (2003) longitudinal study also showed that the quality of overseas study and retention rates were predicted by the quantity of positive relationships with host culture members.

Homesickness is a very important consideration in these students' ability to function effectively in the host country. It has all the markers of loss and bereavement which are principally depression and the personal factors listed for culture shock (Stroebe, van Vliet, Hewstone, & Willis, 2002). The results of the Stroebe et al., (2002) study particularly apply to international Chinese nursing students who represent by far the largest group, because homesickness affects far more females than males particularly those coming from countries where high attachment to and dependence on family are encouraged. Stroebe et al., (2002, p.150) cite several studies which show a relationship between homesickness and "a greater

number of cognitive failures, poor concentration, handing in work late, decrements in work quality, and higher scores on anxiety and depression measures". More than eighty percent of subjects in the Stroebe et al., (2002) study report homesickness which is most intrusive in the first year of study abroad.

There is a lot of externalised but target-less blame when these students present with their many problems. The university's cut-off IELTS score is often seen as the culprit but complex problems like this never have simple solutions and I have been an IELTS examiner of international students for over ten years. Whoever is at fault and it would seem it lies at the very heart of our society today, international students whose first language is not English, constitute a vulnerable group as a whole and in every sense, qualify as "students at risk". Nursing students from China constitute a significant and growing international sector and pose the greatest challenge for universities in the US and Australia. Xu (2003) elaborates the very unique problems these students have. Language is their biggest challenge and compared to the information/technology industry, they require superior communication skills. They are unfamiliar with the differing cultural and professional values and with the health care and nursing delivery systems. There are significant differences in nursing practice and training between the two countries such as training in the death and dying process, psychosocial support of patients, patient advocacy, critical thinking and decision-making. Foreign-educated nurses are often trained in dealing more with communicable diseases and acute illness than with chronic health problems which are so prevalent in western countries. Bola, et al., (2003) point out that differences in medical terminology, abbreviations, jargon, medication names, suffixes, prefixes, names of common items lead to the inability to communicate in emergency situations which could delay care. Poorly written communication may cause injury. Enunciation and pronunciation are very difficult skills for Chinese students to acquire and in emergency situations could pose a threat to life. The potential for litigation is huge. Other barriers highlighted by Ruwe and Al-Wazedi's (2003) study arise from very different teaching philosophies and educational styles. They say these students are disadvantaged by have little awareness of contemporary teaching methods, for example process writing, peer editing and group discussion.

Other communication problems stem from the fact that China is a high-context culture where meaning is given more often in non-verbal codes compared to low-context cultures like Australia where communication relies on the spoken words (Bola, Driggers, Dunlap & Ebersole, 2003). Financial problems also arise due to being paid so little in China, and having to borrow or draw on family savings to pay for visas and training, often work either for very little pay or long hours.

Issues of justice arise in relation to cases where students are ill-equipped linguistically, culturally, academically and emotionally for tertiary study in Australia. Scanlan, et al., (2001) say the power differentials arise from faculties being the unquestioned controllers of the learning environment, behavioural expectations, performance standards and access to information and resources. In addition, there are issues of safety in allowing them to undertake clinical practice. Scanlan et al., (2001) found poor understanding of these students' problems lead to unsafe decisions by staff about the type of practice they can manage. Proper needs assessment of each and every student is recommended with early identification of problems so students have the opportunity to succeed.

There is another sense in which the power differential impinges on international nursing. Ketefian and Redman (1997) are calling for the development of universal, intercultural theories to counter America's cultural values and perspectives which dominate nursing theory through controlling knowledge development and research. They argue that these theories of organisational and human behaviour are based on assumptions which do not have universal applicability. Research questions are framed in such a way that they reflect the values, philosophy, and practices of the culture and society in which they are asked. They cite research into US trained nurses and nurse researchers returning to their countries of origin, not being able to function effectively through inappropriately seeking to transplant American ideas. Ketefian and Redman (1997) cite Minami's research into Japanese postgraduate nursing students acquiring American communication styles and concepts which are irrelevant, inapplicable or inappropriate back home in Japan. The importance of challenging Western perspectives and "paying attention to global content and international nursing issues" cannot be overemphasised (Zwanger, cited in Ketefian & Redman, 1997).

The Model

Dewey's vision was based on a "philosophy of continuity", the belief that people are holistic beings who learn best when body, mind and spirit, experience and knowledge are all engaged in a synergistic way for good. In the Dewey tradition, Senge (1992) came up with "systems theory", the art of seeing the whole and not merely its individual components, while Wheatley (1992) drew on chaos theory to illustrate inter-relationships among organisms. If, however, we look to Eastern philosophies, we might find the basis of the true and original "holistic - connectionist" model of how international education might look, "connectionist" in the sense used in cognitive psychology. If we think of the international community as a unitary "Self", issuing from a "Universal Consciousness" then all the races, nationalities,

cultures, religions, politics and so on, are but arbitrary divisions imposed by the limitation of our perceiving of them as such. If how we formulate policy comes from the view of no division of substance and no "difference" other than what is constructed, then we have a "connectionist" model. No system is structurally any better or worse, more or less important or functional than another, but parts interconnect inextricably and in parallel with the whole, the part affecting the whole and the whole affecting the part. Education in the true sense of the word then, is about the whole person, and multiple intelligences, including "emotional intelligence" and the totally neglected "spiritual intelligence".

Discussion

Values are at the core of the connectionist model because they are universal. Since the primary concern of nursing is people and of education is humanising society, values have to be the starting point for designing and implementing international student programmes. We can begin to apply the model to how we meet the needs of our international students. The Code for Nurses (cited in Ketefian & Redman, 1997) states that good nursing practice is founded on moral principles, the most fundamental being respect for persons and the principles stemming from respect like autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, veracity, confidentiality, fidelity and justice. This code ought to be applied to international education generally so that everyone involved in its administration and delivery might base their practice on them and model them for the people they serve. Nurse education must of necessity recognise that once qualified, nurses have to address the biophysical and psychosocial needs of their patients but how are they expected to do so if we do not address their needs?

Kosowski (2001) says nursing programmes ought to enable experiences that promote caring, and respect for diversity, as well as that support the development of a critical social conscience. Encouragement motivates all students to learn and reinforces desirable professional behaviours. For nursing students, affective development is vital, for without acceptance and encouragement, "responding" behaviours essential to good nursing practice may not develop. Leininger's Sunrise Model for nursing education which can be applied to education as a whole, places "caring" at its centre. Four of its six dimensions are to do with the whole person. Apart from technical and educational factors, religious/philosophical, kinship/social, cultural/lifestyle, political/legal and economic factors must all be integrated into a model of teaching and learning (Cook & Cullen, 2000; Bola et al., 2003).

Cultural differences are all too often blamed for communication and interaction problems. The time to review outworn ways of thinking about cultural education is well overdue. Duffy (2001) highlights this need for a new, transformative approach to cultural education because evidence suggests present cultural education does not increase cultural sensitivity and understanding but rather, perpetuates a limiting view of the differentiation of self from other. This approach is based on an outdated anthropological model used to study alien tribes to stereotype them according to unique characteristics. Current nursing emphasises cultural distinctions that do not persist in the postmodern world and it is these "cultural monoliths" which have to be replaced using principles of transformative education. "Students are encouraged to be vulnerable to personal change when interacting with people from other cultures because transformative education is as much about personal growth as it is about enhanced care of others" (Duffy, 2001, p.489). International programmes which send local students and staff abroad are advocated as one of the ways to bridge the divides (Gray, Murdock, & Stebbins, 2002). I have written about transformative education in another paper which expands this model of education for the future (Giorgio, 2004).

Feeling connected to others and having a sense of belonging in the academic environment are considered crucial determinants of felt success and satisfaction. Suggestions for how this might occur are learning and practising stress management and relaxation techniques, being able to talk openly about feelings in groups, discovering commonalities by sharing personal stories in a climate of trust, confidentiality and mutual respect, and very importantly, to have faculty listen to their concerns without judgment. Awareness-raising of the diversity of identities and views of caring is recommended through shared "stories", an exercise which builds a sense of community essential to creating a climate of openness and acceptance. Behaviour characterised by valuing motivated not by the desire to comply but by commitment to the underlying values guiding behaviour are to be encouraged. Self-assessment through journaling assists students to understand the role of inward reflection in value development. The use of case study is a useful tool for exploring how identity affects values.

Application of the model – valuing the individual: needs assessment

A healthy educational environment is one that is flexible, accommodating and values spontaneity and one that listens to student and teacher alike without prejudice. Teaching and learning must take into account the target situation, the learning environment and the individual learner and teacher which are all constantly in a state of flux. The design and organization of a course occur before, during and after teaching has begun as ongoing

negotiation between teacher and student on the basis of changing perceptions of the target situation and its problems.

ESL pedagogy claims that one of its key characteristics is that it meets the specified needs of the learner (Strevens, 1988, p.2) which supposedly works towards the main aim "...to provide the learner with the capacity to handle communication in the target situation" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1984, p. 109). The first characteristic refers to "needs analysis" or the process of determining who the learner is, why s/he needs to study, what s/he hopes to do at the end of instruction. Though the concept of needs analysis arose out of learner-centred education which puts the learner's needs, learning styles and beliefs about learning at the centre of curriculum decisions, this does not occur in practice even when “needs” are defined in the narrowest of terms. “Personal needs”, “emotional needs”, “social needs”, “spiritual needs” are commonly viewed as lying outside the preserve of “education” as we covertly define it. Tarone (1989) outlined three methods of assessing needs: review the literature on the learning problems encountered by the client; assess individual clients orally or via questionnaires, tests, and observation, or use the case study method to assess needs through direct observation over time. The process-oriented approach of the case study to needs assessment is preferred because it is closer to an holistic view of the learner.

In the area of programming, Hutchinson and Waters (1984) suggest we take into account the needs and expectations of all parties in the educational environment. This is most important if we view education as a cooperative venture based on mutual respect and consideration. Within ELICOS and adjunct courses in professional University studies, needs analyses do not have to rigidly specify programmes as immutable courses of action (Nunan, 1988). I have argued elsewhere for a common core curriculum for Levels of ELICOS and English for Academic Purposes outside of the tertiary context, and faculty-based specialised ESP programmes within university departments (Giorgio, 1995b).

The questionnaire-based action research conducted with a problematic "advanced" ELICOS class exemplifies the issues of addressing learner needs. Among the four classes I taught at UNITEC in Auckland in 1999, was one largely Asian group with a mix of ex and current international students (some having acquired permanent residency hoping to gain easier entry to Australia). Reports received about this group were not favourable even before I began working with them. I did indeed find levels of frustration, anxiety, dissatisfaction not evident in other classes. Any number of interpretations could have been put on the students' behaviour but when I heard of similar cases in other teriary settings among "advanced" level classes, I became interested in finding some specific causes. An article was spotted in my pile

of unread photocopies entitled, "The crisis in FL teaching in American colleges: towards a diagnosis and remedy" by Nakuma. This revealed a phenomenon among "advanced" classes referred to as the "post-intermediate void" in which students experience difficulty adjusting to "advanced" instruction delivered in an "academic" way as opposed to the more "communicative" methods of the lower levels. I had notes from a seminar conducted in 1998 by Simone Volet which I attended at Murdoch University while living in Perth. She spoke about the social adjustments that have to be made by both staff and students and of the significance of reciprocal understanding in their interactions. Spurred on by her observations, I read Moghaddam, Taylor and Wright's "Social Psychology in Cross-Cultural Perspective" and found concepts that could be relevant to an understanding of the problem class such as "cultural fit", "ethnocentrism", "cultural distance", "contagion effect", "identity theory" and others. I began to find good reason for not accepting that the "difficulties" this class was experiencing were due to teacher personality, course content, the institution, or the method of instruction. Of course such matters are always very complex.

I then designed a questionnaire with a rating scale (appendix 1). We spent a few lessons demystifying the language. Items were to elicit some measure of overall "adjustment". My hypothesis was that students were exhibiting high anxiety and low frustration tolerance as a result of the adjustment process to life in New Zealand and that this phase negatively impinges on their attitude to English language learning at the advanced level. I found very high levels of anxiety on all indicators with a very high felt desire to communicate, learn about and interact with local native speakers both from a language and cultural perspective. They were high on frustration and confusion and low on regret and disappointment. They felt very awkward with native speakers and experienced high levels of misunderstandings and misinterpretations. They felt themselves to be ineffective as learners with large gaps in their education. They expressed high motivation and willingness to adopt the new country and language but low expectations of success.

A further illustration of the complex interweaving of learner and environment factors which influence learning and teaching is given in a case study conducted of a UNESCO scholarship student nicknamed Mac, from Beijing (appendix 2). According to Moag's (1982) taxonomy of English-using societies, English in China is a "foreign language". It has very low levels of official recognition, use and influence. Many people learn a narrow range of English registers from non-native speakers without reference to its cultural origins or present native use. In addition to these societal influences, Chinese students in general, present with different attitudes to knowledge, and different expectations about teaching and learning (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991). Mac was no exception. The case study shows how placing learner needs at

the centre and remaining open and flexible with a caring attitude saved what may have been a very negative experience for this engaging and likeable person.

– course design and delivery

My experience of teaching in several university language centres led me to recommend the provision of only English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses based on the very particular discourses of students' academic study and that they be conducted only by "expert" ESL trained teachers with a background of study in that discourse, for example, ESL teachers conducting nursing ESP courses who are also trained in medical science (Giorgio, 1994). The problem with non-specialist teachers is that they lack technical knowledge and are overly concerned with the form of language rather than its communicative effectiveness. Also, students and subject lecturers see the language or academic adviser's role as peripheral, so there is little commitment and motivation to work together. This has certainly been my observation and needs to be addressed.

More applicable to the target situation of International Nursing students are the methodological recommendations of Pholsward and Allen (1988), and Selinker (1988). They recommend ongoing professional collaboration with academic advisers and ESL specialist teachers to work alongside of academic staff using the subject texts and assignments as starting points for designing activities. Alternatively, departments provide in-service training to academic staff in ESL methodology. Pholsward and Allen (1988) suggest a three step skills-based approach to designing activities with a focus on the concepts and linguistic features of textbooks. Schmidt's (1981) recommended supporting students in "the lecture" since it relies heavily on the ability to understand the stream of speech, condense it, and record the "kernel" or main ideas in the notes. Because information in lectures is often culture-bound and delivered quickly in unfamiliar terms and accents, ESL students often miss the point or if they understand it, cannot record it in English. Nunan (1988) advises that different academic areas require different communication skills which need to be specifically taught. Furthermore, it is a myth that maths-based subjects are easier for second language learners who not only misunderstand actual arithmetic calculations but often are unable to coherently explain the underlying theoretical relationships between factors and therefore resort to memorization of notes and translation (Giorgio & Chinnappan, 2002).

Further funding is advised for competent research students or tutors with PhDs and ESL qualifications, to mentor international students particularly the more vulnerable first year

nursing and postgraduate research students. Because writing in medical science differs markedly from writing in other disciplines, specific teaching of the discourse is necessary on an ongoing basis. Parkhurst (1990) recommends focus groups for extensive practise in reading scientific texts, discussing the readings and writing about the readings. Activities are to include oral summaries of the main points, written reviews of professional articles, collaborative library-based research projects, extensive pre-writing discussion, co-authoring, group feedback and multiple revision. Other relevant interventions may be modelled on Griffiths and Tagliareni's (1999) Project IMPART; Ryan's (2003) Buddy Program and the Caring and Study groups advocated by Kosowski (2001).

– provision of appropriate materials

It is a mistake to focus on the grammatical lacks of ESL students once accepted into university courses since competence is never just linguistic, but also incorporates sociocultural and everyday scientific/technical knowledge and the ability to apply cognitive processing strategies. For international nursing students, resources are better spent in providing learning activities in small groups such as case study analysis which draws on communicative competence rather than grammatical competence thereby enabling students to acquire culturally appropriate discourse strategies necessary for successful academic and professional performance (Micheau & Billmyer, 1987). Alcy & Van-Naerssen (1984), recommend selecting materials which are "authentic" which for nursing students would be what is found in real-life communicative situations including anything from news broadcasts reporting advances in medicine to TV hospital soapies.

– valuing the teacher

Teaching international students requires a high level of skill over and above expertise in the field of discourse and its practice. What is needed are negotiating skills, active listening, time management, decision-making, planning and organizing, and cultural sensitivity. Institutional supports across the university should exist by way of network teams, attendance at conferences, seminars, training courses, working parties, and on-going professional development and study assistance. The extra challenge of teaching such students needs to be given formal recognition and work loads need to be reduced together with class sizes. Administrative assistants need to be employed to do a lot of the time-consuming work academics are involved in. Mediation and complaints resolution are vitally important as are

regular professionally managed and institution funded recreational, motivational and team building “retreats”.

Conclusion

Ultimately, all institutional practice is based on philosophy. Every decision to act reflects some fundamental assumption about the world in which we exist. The goal is to encourage a thoughtful and conscious application of what we most cherish and to make it a lived reality. Most higher education mission statements reflect the belief in educating the whole person, of promoting citizenship, social responsibility and understanding as core concerns, but political and economic forces create divisions that are eventually translated into philosophy antithetical to mission statements.

In 2001, the Nursing Education Advisory Council formed a task group on nursing education standards to develop a set of standards termed “Hallmarks of Excellence” (Nursing Education Perspectives, 2004). Though aimed at nursing, they are applicable to all faculties and can be included in the aims and objectives of all courses of study. Of note is the standard that our curriculum reflects local and global perspectives, that it provides experiential cultural learning activities and that it enhances critical thinking, thoughtful reflection, cultural sensitivity and values development. Resources to foster are partnerships that benefit the local and global community and foster positive change. This applies equally to students and faculty for we do well to question our own value system and take time for spiritual development and personal growth. It is good to have a little “culture shock” if it means we look at our own cultures, values and beliefs and perhaps find them wanting (Petersen, 1995).

In a world that is changing at a phenomenal rate, it is more necessary than ever to constantly evaluate the processes, goals and directions of education and the reality that we live in a global village, that we are all related and that we interact with great consistency. All educational endeavour must relate to a broader “worldview”. Because of the diversity of educational approaches that exist around the world, any field of study and nursing in particular, faces an increasingly complex challenge. Transcultural education necessitates strong partnership in defining education’s evolution. It must be based on a consciousness that focuses on similarities and not differences, that acknowledges “We are one world. How we work together will be a crucial determinant of the quality of the world and peace we enjoy in the future. Nursing has the capacity to lead the way” (Zungolo & Corcoran, 2002, p.6).

As Xu (2003) points out: “The internationalist perspective is essentially rooted in the interdependence paradigm…the mobility of people among nations creates synergy and added values…mobility contributes to the optimal utilisation of human resources and the maximum realization of human potentials.” However glowing the theory, it is the practice that counts and we have a long way to go yet. The potential benefits of shared meanings and understanding achieved by genuine interaction and honest discourse far outweigh the temporary and limited financial gains of a purely instrumental approach to international education (Ekstrom & Sigurdsson, 2002). The first step, in Duffy’s (2001) words, is to “expand the critical lens and apply it inwards towards oneself and one’s culture, to broaden perspectives that avoid perpetuation of institutional status quo, ethnocentricity, superiority, and cultural hegemony” (p.491). To discover the truth about culture, she says, is to discover a “hyper-reality” based on a dynamic interplay of the individual and the global. In a global society, cultures are no longer “unique and impenetrable” and differences within cultures and similarities across cultures will increase as more individuals interact and discover their similarities. Such a view bridges the arbitrary divides which belong to the world of illusions. Duffy (2001) borrows Senator Fullbright’s axiom that people who know each other are less likely to hate each other because they are more likely to recognize their commonalities.

If education is about knowledge then let us consider the kind of knowledge which:

> …identifies its Self with all the Selves amid which it has been evolving, and sees as the Not-Self only the matter connected alike with all Selves severally. That is the “day be with us”, the union which is the triumph of evolution, when consciousness knows itself and others, and knows others as itself…It is this wondrous nature of the Self, who is evolving in us through knowledge at the present time, that we have to study, in order to understand, the nature of thought… (Besant, 1909, pp.12-13).

Let us have the willingness to entertain provocative ideas.

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Appendix 1

QUESTIONNAIRE administered 11/10/99 to EAP students

1) How important is interacting with native speakers to improve your English?

very high----------quite high----------average----------low---------very low---not at all

2)If you could attend a conversation group with native speakers, how interested would you be in attending?

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

3) TICK in which of these places you interact with native speakers:

church.....….…..
community centre.....…...
kids play group or school..
club e.g. sports.....…....
neighbourhood group.....
local library.....….....
UNITEC.....….…..
other.....….

4) Indicate the level of anxiety you feel about the following:
finance

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

employment

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

health

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

English proficiency

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

family

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

5)Indicate the present level of difficulty you feel you have with studying:

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

6)Indicate the level of difficulty you have with studying on account of

your motivation

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

your level of English

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

other commitments e.g. work/family

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

your learning habits or style

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

7)Rate the effect of not having studied for some time on your present difficulties.

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

8)Rate the difference between the learning strategies you used to study for your profession in your country and the strategies you need to learn a foreign language?

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

9)How great are the differences between how students learn in different Asian countries? viz. China/Korea/Japan/India/Thailand/Singapore/Hong Kong

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

10)How great are the perceived differences between these different cultures and yours?

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

11)How great are the differences you perceive between the learning and teaching styles in your country of origin and New Zealand?

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

12)Rate the importance of having lesson content about New Zealand and its culture.

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

13)Rate the importance of having lesson content about your own country and culture

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

14)Rate the importance of the teacher to your success in learning

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

15)Rate the importance of yourself in success or failure at learning English

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

16)How great are the differences you perceive between your own and New Zealand culture?

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

17)Rate the frequency with which you misinterpret or misunderstand the behaviour or attitudes of native born New Zealanders?

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

18)Indicate the level of change in educational practices in your country of origin.

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

19)At what rate is change happening in the culture of your country of origin?

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

20)Indicate the degree of change in your attitude and behaviour since living in NZ.

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

21)At what level would Kiwi behaviours, manners or attitudes be offensive to you?

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

22)How highly would you rate your feelings of

confusion
very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

frustration
very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

anxiety
very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

regret
very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

disappointment
very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

23)Rank how important it is for New Zealanders to understand your culture.

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

24)Rank how important it is for New Zealanders to learn your language

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

25)Rank how important it is for you to understand Kiwi culture

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

26)Rate the level of awkwardness you feel in interactions with Kiwis

very high----------quite high----------average----------low----------very low---not at all

Appendix 2

CASE STUDY OF MAC conducted semester 2, 1994

The first step in determining the needs of all relevant parties was to conduct oral interviews with Mac and the Head of the Centre hosting him. Mac was a high school Physics textbook writer and Science editor for the Chinese Government Publishing House. Pronunciation difficulties were immediately apparent, for example "price" for "press", "pracsize" for "practice", "concepture" for "concept". Vocabulary was also limited, for example, "qualifications", "score", "rating" were unknown to him. Numerous inaccuracies in surface features were apparent such as "I'm write some junior high school book", "I tell he what I want to show". In attempting to take him to his linguistic breaking-point, I drew him into discussion about general education principles and basic Physics. He had considerable difficulty with anything other than rudimentary junior Physics terminology. He knew "nuclear energy" but not "velocity" or "diagram". He pronounced "distance" as "sistance" and had difficulties repeating the spelling of "diagram." He was unable to explain theory except as an incomplete formula or a sketchy and simplistic explanation which would have been incomprehensible to anyone without a Physics background. He was able to convey that his interest lay in the connection between Physics, life and society but was unable to explain coherently what he meant by this.

He did not know what UNESCO stood for and had never heard of The United Nations. He knew that the World Bank gives money to China for educational advancement and that his "Unit" had received money for this purpose. The criteria for receiving a scholarship was a TOEFL score which Mac informed me had no oral component. Yet he did not sit for the TOEFL himself. He did the EPT test which the Chinese Government administers. I thought it may have been the British PET test but he said China has changed it to EPT which he says is like the TOEFL and is a grammar test. When questioned about the importance of grammar in dealing with non-Chinese, he said speaking and writing skills are more important. He knew that native speakers find his writing and speaking incomprehensible and believed that speaking with native speakers would help.

He had a positive orientation towards Australia and expressed a liking for the green landscape, clean air, kind people, quality produce, comparative wealth and lack of crowds. He had heard about Australia from an expatriate Australian teaching English in China. He found the Australian accent harder to understand than the American and was frequently

unable to understand anything in a conversation. While in Australia, he did not live with native speakers but chose to share with a Chinese speaker. When asked to suggest specific activities for English lessons he said he would like to talk to native speakers, learn vocabulary lists, spell more accurately, read material from Physics textbooks, do grammar exercises, do tests like the TOEFL, listen to radio and TV news, write social letters and learn more about Australia. From this it seemed that a general English course would be most beneficial. This was most interesting as I thought his urgent need was to write and deliver the research paper as comprehensibly as possible within six months and I thought I was being employed by the centre to assist him in this. That he had other needs only became apparent when I invited him to a dinner and social evening at my house with his superviser from the Centre. He was to be picked up but at the last minute, rang to say that he was working that evening in Chinatown washing dishes because he had to send money back home to his wife and child.

So I then met with the Director of the Centre to find out what the Centre's or UNESCO's expectations were. The Director was keen to put into practise the University's policy of internationalization in terms of establishing joint research programmes, peer review work, transfer of ideas, reciprocal visits and maintaining cordial international relations. He also suggested Mac write an article on "Science Education in China Today" which was to draw on comparisons with Australia and which could be presented at the Centre's seminar programme and possibly at a conference.

It seemed from this that I was to design an individually tailored ESP course as there appeared to be very specific goals like the writing of a research paper and its presentation at a seminar as well as meeting Mac’s request for letter writing and conversational skills. The next step was to meet again with Mac and to discuss these expectations. When questioned directly as to why he was given the scholarship, he volunteered that he was in Australia to study Physics curriculum in high schools. He hoped to learn new approaches to the teaching of Physics which could then inform the writing of a new national Physics textbook for all High Schools in China. He told me that English is very important in China today and that the Government is encouraging the learning of English as an international language. Everyone in his work unit at the Government Publishing House in Beijing has to be proficient in English so that s/he can read research in English, attend international meetings and deal with international companies. This discussion added a new dimension to my brief.

I then reported back to the Director the preferences of the client and asked for his suggestions. He directed me to the ABC Science programme, Physics textbooks in use in high schools, and academic journals like The Physics Teacher, The Journal of Research in

Science Teaching and The Science Teacher. He asked me to keep note of how Mac was progressing and of any feedback Mac might give about his experiences in Australia. In the case of Mac, learner and environment factors were both very important in course design.

While I encouraged Mac to express his needs and to be part of goal-setting, I also had to be guided by the requirements set down by the terms of the scholarship and by the Head of School. He expressed a need to cope with real-life communication in a variety of socio-cultural contexts which seemed at odds with academic competence in a narrow range of contexts. A specifically tailored programme incorporating the needs of all parties concerned was devised and implemented.

After two months, progress was indeed very slow indeed. Mac had not kept up with the demands of the professional part of the programme but valued the language component with me. Much of his time was spent in word processing which he could not do prior to coming to Australia. I gathered from conversations with him and editing some of his letters, that he was attempting to get his wife and child to Australia. He indicated that he wished to drop out of the curriculum lectures as he could not follow much. He had already dropped out of computing which he said had become totally incomprehensible. He also indicated that he did not want any more observation visits to publishers as he said they were not particularly useful. I wondered if Mac's apparent lack of motivation and general state of disorganisation were a reflection of the emotional and mental turmoil he was experiencing. The demands of living in a foreign country, homesickness and the overwhelming linguistic demands being placed on him were all just too much. After spending an entire three hour session organizing all his material into folders, I suggested we drop everything to concentrate on the article writing for the seminar which was fast approaching and which he absolutely had to do as much to save face as anything. He had not done any independent reading but waited for me to highlight and paraphrase relevant sections of the articles and to explain them orally.

The first draft of the assignment remained purely descriptive, simplistic and not challenging to the intended audience. I attempted to get Mac to "reflect" and say something critical. He was able to openly criticize Australian schools so the problem may have been reluctance rather than inability to criticize. In the interests of scholarship, I persisted. My next approach was to take the student to the library and find articles on China's education system. We read the articles together and I highlighted the parts that were openly critical of the system. His response to my request for an opinion on the article was that it was true of the past but not now. The artile was written by a Chinese professor at Beijing University in 1986.

If Mac was in Australia on a UNESCO scholarship to take back new ideas in curriculum policy and planning, then it appeared to be a fundamental requirement that he make judgments not only about Queensland's education system but also his own. How else would he justify his winning the scholarship on the basis that he find ways to improve China's education system? The second draft proved a further challenge as it was a mixture of "over the top" propagandist rhetoric which spoke of China's glowing achievements in flawless, pedantic, poetic style, and his own torturously flawed, incoherent style. We revisited how to write an "evaluative" argument and radical changes were made. The paper was eventually written and delivered.

With four months still to go, a revised programme was in order. I began to think he was better off outside the lonely environment of the academic centre and in a general ELICOS course with other students which he would find more relaxing and enjoyable as he was quite sociable and loved outings. Whether or not he achieved the objectives of the scholarship in the manner initially expected seemed quite irrelevant now. It was better he enjoyed his time in Australia, so after reporting all this to the centre director, Mac transferred to ELICOS and had a wonderful time.