Innovations in partnership-driven teacher education: stimulating Australian languages education through transnational knowledge networking

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Abstract

Recent history has seen languages education in Australian education come and go. Asian economies have prospered and fallen into ‘crises’, only to more recently re-emerge with strength, while Australian governments have been variously committed and uncommitted to intellectually and linguistically engaging Asia. Although there is a government mandate to internationalize (and nationalize) the curriculum to serve national economic interests, ‘western’ economies are now faltering, as was the case for the initial Australian Asia literacy program. Against this history this paper focuses on efforts to build intellectual and linguistic connections between Asia and Australia via international (as well as migrant and refugee) students from the region. Internationalizing Australian education by building intellectual and linguistic connections with international students from Asia can no longer be considered inconsequential or peripheral to Australia’s economic interests, not in the least because of the increasingly competitive international student market. In elaborating this argument we report on the conceptual development of a research-based, school engaged teacher education partnership between Western Sydney and Ningbo and examine the prospects for a spin-off project to have local students make intellectual and linguistic connections with international students, most of whom come from Asia.

Introduction

For the purposes of this paper the internationalization of education is defined here the engagement with the intellectual and linguistic assets of international students coming to study in Australia. Despite near on three decades of the commoditization of education by a coalition of Australian Labor and Liberal Governments, competition for international students in the nation’s higher education sector seems to have done little to drive
the internationalization of their programs, especially those in teacher
education.\textsuperscript{1} Given that eighty per cent of international students in Australian
higher education institutions come from Asia,\textsuperscript{2} many questions about
internationalizing Australian teacher education programs and pedagogies
remain to be addressed. Of course, this problem might be explained away
due to the humanities, which include education, attracting only thirteen
per cent of international student enrolments.\textsuperscript{3} However, this paper explores
an innovative teacher-researcher education partnership that promotes
international students bilingual capabilities as a way of contributing to
this re-conceptualization of the internationalization of Australian teacher
education and higher education more generally.\textsuperscript{4}

Specifically, this paper reports on how the development of a research-based,
school engaged teacher education partnership between Western Sydney
and Ningbo which engages international students from China in using
theoretical tools from their homeland as a basis for engaging in higher order,
conceptually-driven dialogues with local teachers and teacher educators.
As Singh\textsuperscript{5} argues, the transnational exchange of non-Western and Western
theoretical knowledge can no longer be marginalized if Australian teacher
education in particular and the liberal arts more generally are to deepen
and extend connections between intellectual and linguistic projects in
Australia and Asia. This paper concludes with a brief a consideration of the
prospects of the Transnational Knowledge Network in Education (i-TKNe)
project, funded by the Australian Teaching and Learning Council Project.
This highly portable project promises to elaborate on the possibilities
transnational knowledge exchange between domestic and international
students that has been pioneered by the Western Sydney-Ningbo teacher-
researcher education partnership. The debates over ‘Asia literacy’ provided
the stimulus for the partnership between the Western Sydney Region (NSW
Department of Education and Communities), and the University of Western
Sydney, and the Ningbo Municipal education Bureau (China).\textsuperscript{6}

\textbf{Asia illiteracy}

In the early 1990s Asian languages education was represented as essential for
Australia’s economic success in Asia. However, resistance to Asian language
studies by power blocs associated with the residues of ‘White Australia
politics’\textsuperscript{7} have made it difficult for Australia to develop the linguistic capital
needed to make intellectual connections with Asia.\textsuperscript{8} Moreover, the problem
now is that efforts to internationalize teacher education risk reproducing
Orientalist knowledge practices which informed the Asia literacy agenda.\textsuperscript{9}
Even so, the theoretical knowledge embedded in the linguistic capital
available to international (as well as immigrant and refugees) students from
Asia can no longer be ignored in projects to internationalize teacher education.
In the 1990s educational researchers used Said’s\textsuperscript{10} notion of ‘Orientalism’
to critical analyse Asia illiteracy in Australian teacher education.\textsuperscript{11} Singh\textsuperscript{12}
critiques Asia illiteracy as a basis for the reproduction and contestation
of White Australia politics and its inherent Orientalism and colonialist narratives about the West and its non-Western Others. At the time, Asian languages education was introduced into Australian schools as a part of the Keating Labor Government’s Asia literacy agenda. What comprised Asia literacy, however, was the subject of much debate. This contestation proved to be both generative and creative. One position held that Asia literacy comprised a strategy for enhancing Australia’s economic competitiveness within selected countries in Asia in response to the intensifying economic regionalism evident in the rise of trade blocs such as the European Union and the newly industrialized countries, the so-called Asian Tigers among. The economic analysis presented in Rudd’s report forecast increased trade with Asia; a prediction which in the case of China and India has proven to be correct. However, in apparent contrast to Australia’s APEC agenda, China has a multi-focal local-regional-global orientation to the world, evident in initiatives such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation which focuses on socio-economic and security issues in Central Asia.

By mid-1990s Asia literacy was being challenged on two fronts. First, the residue of ‘White Australia politics’ was mobilized in opposition to the Labor Government and was crystallized in Pauline Hanson’s One Nation Party. In 1996 the Howard Liberal-National Government, which resisted calls to challenge this xenophobic politics, questioned the need for Asian languages education. Those opposed to Asian languages education represented Asia literacy as a multicultural metropolitan project intent on privileging Asian immigrants at the expense of rural, Anglophone Australians. Policy makers had underestimated the ‘discomfort of sections of Australian society with the cultural shifts required to embed Asian languages and cultures as part of the knowledge economy’.

The second front for attacking Asia literacy was the 1997 currency and financial crisis in Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia and Thailand. This was produced by the insistence of a political-bloc in the USA on experimenting with neo-liberal market regimes in these countries. Seemingly, the crisis meant that there was no significant advantage to be gained from trade with Asia, over and above trade with Euro-American allies. This added to the doubts about the value of pursuing Asian languages education and increased the weight of the challenges mounted against Asia literacy.

The Asian/American economic crisis exposed the tenuousness of Rudd’s economic rationale for Asia literacy. Rather than foreground Australia’s growing economic integration into Asia, because of its abundant natural resources, the Howard Government deployed a populist nationalist rhetoric reaffirming Australia’s cultural, economic and military ties to Anglo-American allies. Although a title and role denied by Howard, his Government positioned Australia as the USA’s ‘deputy sheriff’ in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific, exemplified in its peace-keeping and governance missions. In 2002 the Howard Government withdrew Federal funding for
the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy. In 2005 the Cronulla riots saw young Anglo-Australian males draped in the Australian flag fighting with fellow Australians of ‘Middle Eastern’ appearance.20 In 2007, Australians voted for a Labor Federal Government led by Mandarin speaking Kevin Rudd, the author of the 1994 Asia literacy policy. Re-engaging Asia saw Asian languages education resurface. Rudd’s successor, Australia’s first woman Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, provided a modicum of short-term support for Asian languages education. Over these two decades Australia’s investment in languages education has fallen far short of China’s investment in foreign language education, which includes sending its students overseas to enhance their English language learning.

However, there are continuing challenges here to promoting Asian and European languages education in Australia. The attacks on international university students from India21 tend to drive attention away from important educational questions to the equally important issues of students well-being and managerial concerns about the decreasing numbers of international student enrolments in (some) Australian universities.22 Student welfare provides a strong focus for therapeutic approaches to engaging international students, reinforcing the avoidance of the significant educational issues concerning Australian higher education’s intellectual engagement with Asian and European languages and theories. For instance, Sawir et al.23 and Haugh24 focus concerns on the claim that the majority of the international students experience loneliness in Australian higher education. Likewise, much of the debate over interactions between international and local students focuses upon cultural barriers to their social adjustment or assimilation.25 Little, if any consideration is given to intellectual and linguistic engagement as a mean of mediating or mitigating these concerns. Monash University’s Vice-Chancellor, Ed Byrne explains the complex array of factors that continues to push languages education and both-ways intellectual engagement to the sidelines thus:

The multi-billion-dollar education export industry has been hit by tougher rules for student visas, the high Australian dollar, bad publicity from attacks on Indian students, doubts about quality and aggressive recruitment by the US and Britain.26

The attacks on Indian international students and doubts about the quality of Australian vocational education are having their impact on marginalizing languages education and East/West, North/South intellectual engagement in Australian universities. Any acknowledgment of any deficiencies in current approaches to internationalizing Australian higher education rarely, if ever recognize any problem with its deficits in languages education. For instance, the University of Melbourne’s Vice-Chancellor, Glyn Davis states:

The entire Australian higher education system depends on revenue from international students, so the people who will lose out from this are the Australian students whose study is strongly supported by income from international students.27
In sum, the contestation of racial and linguistic diversity by power blocs wedded to White Australia politics have contributed to derailing the internationalization of Australian higher education, undermining the intellectual and linguistic benefits that could accrue to local Australian students. Further, in public debates Australian universities foreground the neo-liberal connection between students’ well-being and the economic dimensions of marketing higher education internationally. The place of languages and knowledge exchange in internationalizing Australian education is left to the margins. In particular, these debates strategically avoid issues of programs and pedagogies for the inclusion of the non-Western theoretical and linguistic knowledge which is potential available to and through bilingual international students for internationalizing Australian higher education.

**Internationalizing Australian teacher education**

According to an international student officer from the National Students Union, a key problem for internationalizing teacher education is that ‘there is not enough intellectual engagement between international and domestic students ... the sad outcome is that both parties do not interact educationally’. While there have been initiatives to address the well-being of international students, pedagogies that actually engage international students and local people in intellectual and linguistic interactions have not received the serious minded attention they warrant. Pedagogies that promote intellectual and linguistic interactions between international students and Australians of all kinds are lacking. Bradley, Noonan, Nugent and Scales are concerned about the lack of pedagogically driven intellectual and linguistic interactions between international students from Asia and Australian students, because it means that domestic students lack ‘access to new knowledge through exposure to the diverse viewpoints of international students’. This seeming absence of pedagogies for promoting intellectual and linguistic interactions is a key problem confronting Australian university managers and their schools, faculties and departments. The absence of such intellectual and linguistic interactions between locals and international students is a significant pedagogical problem in teacher education in particular.

International students from non-Western countries are critical of the absence of the kinds of institutionally structured and legitimated pedagogies necessary to facilitate their desired intellectual and linguistic interactions with domestic students. For those international students who elect to meet Australia’s shortage of teachers, this lack of pedagogically structured interaction disadvantages them in the Australian teacher employment market. Further, this lack of intellectual and linguistic interaction impacts the preparedness of Australian students to take up teaching positions in an increasingly global teacher employment market. It also reduces opportunities for them to be better prepared to teach in Australia, where international, immigrant and refugee students are increasingly part of the student profile of Australian schools.
Despite often excelling in their studies, international students from Asia report being ignored or not being listened to by local students. For instance, Zhou, Knoke and Sakamoto’s study of Chinese international students’ experiences in Canadian universities found that they used various strategies to share their Chinese knowledge with locals. However, Zhou, Knoke and Sakamoto found that their intellectual contributions were limited by a failure of universities to provide curriculum, pedagogical and assessment mechanisms for the inclusion of Chinese students’ intellectual assets in what was proclaimed as an international or even universal intellectual conversation. Similarly, Singh and Shrestha’s investigation of international students’ perceptions, experiences and conceptions of Australian teacher education report that Australian teacher educators ignored these students’ intellectual assets. Likewise, Singh and Han’s follow-up study of Australian teacher education shows that international students’ desire that their intellectual and linguistic assets be admitted into the educational conversations of the local community, but that the rise of a nationalized curriculum and assessment regime in Australia mean this is now being thwarted. This lack of educative means for promoting transnational intellectual and linguistic interactions and the subsequent marginalization of Asian languages and theoretical knowledge can result in international students’ dissatisfaction. At the very least this is seen as having the potential to negatively impact future recruitment from a valuable and competitive global market.

The diversity of bilingual and multilingual university students from throughout continental Asia and beyond occupy the same learning space as their Australian peers. However, there is a lack of institutionally structured and sanctioned pedagogies conducive to the collaborative production and exchange of non-Western languages and theoretical knowledge in Australian higher education. At the very least defining the internationalization of Australian teacher education in terms of pedagogically-driven, student-centred exchange of non-Western theoretical and linguistic knowledge might better understand and address the Australian Government’s interests in this field. Indeed, Federal and State teacher education policy now mandates that graduate teachers be prepared to respond to the linguistic diversity of the students present throughout Australian schools. The ‘draft’ National Graduate Teacher Standards developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership requires that Australia’s graduate teachers ‘demonstrate knowledge of teaching strategies that are responsive to the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic … backgrounds.’ Bilingualism and access to non-Western theoretical knowledge are among the learning strengths of international, migrant and refugee students from continental Asia (and elsewhere). However, AITSL’s standards do not explicate pedagogies that might achieve this.

Research by Singh has been investigating what educational principles might facilitate Australian teacher education’s pedagogical engagement with the linguistic and theoretical knowledge represented by the diversity
of students now present in Australian universities, colleges and schools. Not all teacher education programs in Australia have been so neglectful in this regard. The Western Sydney-Ningbo teacher-researcher education partnership is pressing the internationalization of Australian teacher education by having local and international students pedagogically connected via their engagement in intellectual and linguistic projects explicitly directed at promoting second language learning and the transnational exchange of theoretical knowledge.42

Internationalizing language learning and the exchange of theoretical knowledge

Various measures have been implemented to facilitate ‘integration’ of international students from Asia into Australian higher education. These have mostly comprised approaches to ‘inter-cultural’ understanding aimed at non-Western students’ assimilation using information communication technologies (ICTs) to ensure the non-Western students’ understanding of Western educational culture.43 Thus, what ‘inter-cultural’ understanding means for internationalizing the curriculum is clearly about their ‘assimilation’.44 This is important because as Tamatea45 argues that the conceptualization of the ‘problem’ of internationalizing education in terms of non-Western students’ lack of awareness of, and integration into Western education culture informs the assimilationist pedagogies that seek to resolve this particular interpretation of the problem. This relationship between problem construction and resolution firmly grounds inter-cultural understanding in psychological efforts to promote attitude change.46

While Lu’s47 mapping of the ‘sensitivity’ of cross-cultural student cohorts exemplifies this limitation, Tamatea48 argues that this approach has a central place in internationalizing education.

Freeman49 offers a slightly different approach to inter-cultural understanding. In making a marginal move beyond the focus on attitudes, he reverses the binary representation of local and international students. Local students are represented as being deficient with regard to inter-cultural understanding and the Western-centred curriculum as deficient in its neglect of non-Western languages and theoretical knowledge. This approach inscribes local students with a need to be ‘re-mediated’. Ironically, this palliative and paternalistic approach unproblematically assumes that ‘we’ have the capacity to change by coming to know ‘them’. The liberal-humanist Western subject is constructed as the quintessential agent for making rational intellectual change. This approach assumes that local students could know the Other without any change on ‘our’ behalf, despite unrecognized or unacknowledged similarities, as well as differences in the intellectual assets of the Other. However, this approach denies international students from Asia the equal intellectual capacity to produce and exchange their languages and theoretical tools through Australian higher education.
The challenge of internationalizing the curriculum is not just a matter of fixing incorrect attitudes through exposure to cultural differences in food, costume or music as seems to be the custom in Australian higher education. The construction of the ‘problem’ of internationalizing education as an issue of intercultural awareness or cross-cultural understanding means that the languages and theoretical knowledge international students from Asia have or can access are ignored. Singh argues that this view is limited in its capacity to engage in transnational knowledge exchange between Australia and Asia. Thus, it is doubtful that pursuing ever more precise definitions of inter-cultural understanding and constructing ever-longer lists of international students’ customs will be intellectually worthwhile. Rather, the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) has recommended that the institutionalization of structures that assure the quality of internationalization in Australian higher education. To achieve this objective requires the construction of appropriate curriculum and pedagogical structures grounded in a re-conceptualization of the ‘problem’ that moves beyond a preoccupation with attitude change and cross-cultural understanding.

Thus far, the problem of internationalizing Australian education has largely been constructed through a liberal-humanist ethic which Singh argues disregards international students’ intellectual agency. This construction of the problem restricts the focus of internationalizing the curriculum to the international students’ well-being, especially that associated with vague intercultural misunderstandings. By framing the problem in these terms, it is then perhaps not surprising that university structures exclude the theoretical knowledge which international students have or can access through their diverse languages. Although teacher education is a state-driven nation-centric project, ignoring the international mobility of teachers and their participation in internationalizing communities of intellectual practice is not the only response. The prevailing conceptualization of the teacher education may need to be re-envisioned in order to engage Australia’s increasing linguistic diversity and the intellectual assets these languages can provide access to.

The ‘internationalization’ of education tends to be conceptualized in terms of local-global flows of people and ideas. However, Singh argues that in Australia this view tends to be aligned with securing the intellectual hegemony of English and Euro-American theoretical knowledge. However, the internationalization of teacher education grounded in the logic of diffusing or transferring Western knowledge to non-Western countries via international students is questionable. The dissent over the failure to engage non-Western languages and theories as part of internationalizing education is beginning to produce some changes, albeit modest changes in the principles and pedagogies informing Australian teacher education and pedagogies. Increasing regard is being given to educational interventions that engage international students as bilingual agents capable of engaging in the transnational exchange of non-Western theoretical tools.
Sensitivity, understanding and even ‘liking’ of other cultures is valuable. The mounting critiques of existing approaches focus on bringing about changes to the structuring of teacher education programs and pedagogies. However, in the globalization of the market for languages and knowledge—for education and training—universities struggle to maintain their monopoly on providing teacher education. Singh contends that Australian universities need to relinquish their monopoly on the provision of teacher education by entering in partnerships with national and international providers of language and theoretical education. More than this, Singh argues for partnership-driven teacher education that show real community benefit in international students and their local counterparts through developing skills in bilingual literacy and the two-way exchange of Western and non-Western educational concepts, metaphors and images.

To move beyond the focus upon attitude change and the celebration of cultural diversity in dance, food and music, innovative partnership-driven teacher education programs are needed that work with national and international providers to provide language education and education borne of the transnational exchange of theoretical knowledge. The Research-Oriented, School-Engaged Teacher Education (ROSETE) Partnership comprises a relationship-based, intellectually drive alliance between the University of Western Sydney, the NSW Department of Education and Training (Western Sydney Region) and the Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau in China. This program provides for the partnership based education of bilingual teacher-researcher theorists through them teaching Chinese to non-background speakers. The students participating in this partnership-based teacher education program investigate what makes Chinese (Han zi and Putonghua) learnable for non-background speakers and study ways of stimulating Australian school students’ learning of Chinese in Western Sydney primary and secondary schools. Further, these teacher education students used their bilingual capabilities to draw upon metaphors, images and categories from the Chinese language to analyse evidence of their school-based teaching and build a transnational intellectual community in the field of teacher education.

Typically, the first and second generations of Asia literacy programs framed the utility of Asian languages studies in terms of Australian graduates’ off-shore vocational prospects. In contrast, the significance of internationalizing Australian teacher education is in relation to on-shore benefits which are much more visible locally. This is so with regard to the Chinese language education program sponsored by the Western Sydney-Ningbo teacher-researcher education partnership. This program positions international students in Australian teacher education as important linguistic and intellectual mediators for driving the demand for languages education in this country.
Facilitating knowledge exchange and intellectual engagement between international Chinese students and local domestic students in, and through teacher education is an integral focus of the ROSETE Partnership. ROSETE makes these students’ linguistic capital integral to their formation as transnational knowledge workers, moving beyond nebulous notions of intercultural competencies. Most Australian universities claim internationalization of their curriculum as central to their strategic vision. The ROSETE Partnership shows the value of bi- and multilingual capabilities in developing international and local student-teachers engagement in scholarly argumentation and critique using non-Western theoretical tools. As such the ROSETE Partnership provides a model for a national/international partnership–based teacher education that facilitates languages education and the exchange of Western and non-Western theoretical knowledge by international students and, also potentially by migrant and refugee students.

**Pedagogies of intellectual e/quality**

Knowledge in Australian teacher education is often assumed to be culturally neutral, if not universal. This ignores the extent to which Australian teacher education is a product of a European and North American theories and the regulatory and cultural agenda of Anglo-Australian nation-state. Further, what non-Western theories and languages are also being silently ignored. One approach is to take ignorance as standing in opposition to knowledge, a polarity which takes ‘knowledge is good; ignorance is harmful’ . Often aligned with suspicion, this ignorance/knowledge binary sees international students from continental Asia being characterized as deficient and in particular as lacking in critical reasoning. Usually non-Western international students are required to and many desire to dissociate themselves from their non-Western intellectual assets (without subjecting them to an explicit critique) on admittance to Western universities so they can acquire Western knowledge. These students are subjected to remediation for deficiencies in Western educational culture. Through another binary, Cox draws a contrast between ‘dynamic education’ as opposed to ‘inertial education’ stating that: ‘inertial education—the education of [universities]—is always trying to eliminate ignorance, whereas dynamic education forever seeks to find it, as if it were the raw material, the matter which education is to convert into energy’. Thus, Australian inertial teacher education, centred on privileging European and North American theoretical knowledge, leads some international students from Asia to question claims by Australian universities to offer an internationalized education. Some are frustrated by pedagogies that marginalize their theoretical knowledge.

Typically, the educational uses of ignorance, inequity and inequality lead to the ineluctable reproduction of intellectual deficiencies. Surprisingly, however, there are curricular and pedagogical interventions in university education that have been explicitly informed by a more nuanced and delicate interplay of ‘ignorance → knowledge → ignorance’. For example,
for Gough\textsuperscript{71} two types of ignorance are particularly relevant to teacher education. ‘Blind spots’ refer to those areas about which we do not know enough even to ask appropriate research questions. ‘Blind spots’ are a form of structural ignorance. For instance, Bourdieu points to parliamentarians as being structurally ignorant due to being ‘prisoners of a reassuring entourage of benign technocrats who ignore just about everything of the ordinary lives of [the] citizenry, including the extent of their ignorance’.\textsuperscript{72} This is akin to the fictional ‘Matrix’\textsuperscript{73} where people were unconscious of the structuring of their ignorance. Bourdieu argues that because some people in power ‘have been subjected to [structural ignorance] more intensively than the average person [they] continue to contribute to its exercise’.\textsuperscript{74} In contrast, ‘blank spots’\textsuperscript{75} refer to areas of knowledge which we know enough about to ask questions leading to further investigations because we do not as yet have the answers. We can identify blank spots by coming to know the current research and identifying gaps in that knowledge. This kind of ignorance provides researchers with a point of departure for producing new knowledge. For example, since 1985, the Curriculum on Medical Ignorance at the University of Arizona (USA) has used ‘ignorance maps’ and ‘ignorance logs’ as pedagogical tools for teaching, learning and research.\textsuperscript{76}

There is another, quite different possibility for the educational use of ignorance. Consider for a moment Rancière’s\textsuperscript{77} recount of the experiments by a nineteenth century language teacher. Jacotot taught French to Flemish students in the Netherlands when neither party knew the other’s language nor thus, did Jacotot himself know or understand the intellectual assets contained in the Flemish language. Pedagogically, Jacotot decided to ignore any presumption of intellectual inequality between himself as a Frenchman and his Flemish students. Making ignorance of intellectual inequality a defining characteristic of his pedagogy meant Jacotot’s efforts were directed to verifying that his Flemish students were as equally intellectual capable of learning French as those in France.

Rancière’s study of Jacotot’s novel teaching method points to new possibilities for Australian teacher educators. By employing ‘pedagogies of intellectual equality’\textsuperscript{78} it is possible acknowledge their ‘inability to exhaust another’s reality’.\textsuperscript{79} Singh\textsuperscript{80} argues that Western Anglophone teacher educators who employ \textit{pedagogies of intellectual equality} ignore the intellectual inequalities that are dismissive of non-Western international students’ languages and the intellectual assets they contain. They employ pedagogies of intellectual equality to have international (as well as migrant and refugee) students use their bilingual capabilities to engage non-Western intellectual assets, causing these students to connect non-Western theoretical tools with those they have, and are learning from the West. Such pedagogies of intellectual equality create possibilities for developing theoretically informed intellectual connections between Asian and Australian images, metaphors and categories. Such tools can be used to internationalize teacher education by negotiating the known and unknown,
by navigating the linguistic boundaries and terrain that otherwise separate non-Western and Western languages and theoretical knowledge.

Perhaps rather ironically, making ignorance of intellectual inequality generative of pedagogies of intellectual equality sees Anglophone teacher educators, who do not know Asian languages as a positive teaching force; they can have linguistically diverse students demonstrate what they can learn through using their linguistic capital. Curriculum projects aiming to internationalize teacher education might work with these notions of ignorance of intellectual inequality and pedagogies of intellectual equality as drivers of Western/non-Western knowledge exchange, equalizing their intellectual connections. Here international, immigrant and refugee students are positioned as drivers of languages education in Australia through a focus on producing Asian/Australian intellectual interactions that blend Asian/Australian theoretical knowledge.

Making intellectual and linguistic connections via transnational knowledge networks between local and international students also provides a basis for stimulating interest among rural Australian teacher educators and their students in Asian languages, concepts and theories. In regional Australian universities there are relatively lower numbers of international students compared with those in urban centres. The ratio of local to international students in regional universities is low, with the majority of international students concentrated on the inner-city campuses of Australian universities with metropolitan sites. Moreover, both local and international students are often cocooned by differences in educational and language backgrounds, age, gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, as well as work/study commitments, locations and modes of study. This exacerbates the pedagogical problem of promoting intellectual and linguistic interactions between local and international students.

In 2007, the Western Sydney-Ningbo ROSETE Partnership began exploring pedagogies which would address the educational demands of international and local—rural and urban—for overcoming their intellectual isolation. The aim was to find ways in which they would mutually benefit from the richness and vibrancy of participating in transnational research communities. As part of an Australian Research Council project, the chief investigators and research educators organized and conducted monthly videoconferencing seminars for a group of international doctoral students enrolled in the ROSETE Partnership at the University of Western Sydney and doctoral candidates at CQUniversity (Rockhampton). This was later expanded to include researchers and research students from the University of Southern Queensland. Videoconferencing continues to provide the technologically mediated vehicle for extending the intellectual and linguistic engagement of this transnational community of rural and urban—immigrant and international—local and foreign—scholars. Beginning in 2011, many of the concepts and much of the network infrastructure provided by the
Western Sydney-Ningbo ROSETE Partnership were taken up to provide the intellectual basis for the University of New England’s *i-TKNe* project. Unlike the self-funded ROSETE Partnership, *i-TKNe* project secured funding from the Australian Learning and Teaching Council.

**The *i-TKNe* project**

Where ICT is used to facilitate intellectual interactions between local and international students in nation-centred teacher education programs, the danger is that Eurocentric diffusionism may be reinforced and possibly with more efficiency. While ICT can be used to facilitate knowledge production and exchange,\(^85\) without appropriate pedagogy, it can also reproduce asymmetrical intellectual relations.\(^86\) For instance, the diversity of languages used by the local and international students in an online environment is overwhelmed by the predominantly Anglophone monolingualism. Further, the ‘ideal speech community’ is constrained even when all students use English.\(^87\) Although online learning environments can be interactive, they do not necessarily facilitate negotiating knowledge across ‘gaps’ in educational cultures.\(^88\) This is problematic where the focus is upon attitude change as opposed to the production and exchange of non-Western and Western theoretical knowledge. Indeed, it cannot be assumed that the source of problems in ICT mediated learning between local and non-Western international students resides in the international students’ different educational cultures. The ICT environment, which is also a cultural artefact can significantly impact the production and exchange of knowledge by linguistically diverse students, especially where there is a fixation of the technology to the exclusion of the social dimensions required to make it work.\(^89\)

In 2010 UNE was invited to join the Western Sydney-Ningbo teacher education partnership to enable its local Anglophone student-teachers to interact with Western Sydney’s Chinese international students. They had the opportunity to tap into the ‘connected classrooms’ experience gained through videoconferencing among student teacher-researchers from Western Sydney, CQU and USQ. The focus was on exchanging Western and non-Western theoretical tools about education as a vehicle for stimulating the interests of rural Anglophone students’ in the Chinese language and knowledge and for the Chinese students to learn about their Australian peers analytical frameworks for interpreting Australian education. While UNE students were given the opportunity to directly engage intellectually with these international student teacher-researchers from China about these issues, few actually volunteered to make an advantage of this situation.

Drawing upon lessons learned in 2010, University of New England’s *i-TKNe* project was funded by an Australian Learning and Teaching Council grant to network universities to connect domestic and international students for the purpose of knowledge production and transfer in education. The
proposal was based on extending the collaboration among the eight (rural and metropolitan) universities that are variously associated with the Western Sydney-Ningbo teacher education partnership. However, the latter is directed at interrupting the university monopoly on teacher education through its intellectual partnership with the NSW Department of Education and Communities and the Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau. Moreover, the \textit{i-TKNe} project is largely a technology focused undertaken driven by the UNE, to date most attention has been devoted to building in, uploading, testing and then finalizing the functionalities of the learning management system. Through use of open-source learning management software the UNE’s \textit{i-TKNe} project is experimenting with providing a virtual classroom that is independent of and thus in addition to the partner universities’ learning management systems. Specifically, UNE’s \textit{i-TKNe} project is working to find ways to leverage the power of numerous web 2.0 social networking functionalities. The focus is on testing the functions of the learning management site from the perspective of the administrator, anonymous users, students and lecturers, as well as putting in place a number of trigger processes that will automate key tasks so the administration load is reduced. The \textit{i-TKNe} project’s technology focus entails addressing issues of layout, graphics, the accuracy of information and ease of use to create a website that is a professional looking ‘product’.

Once this is completed it is assumed that lecturers from the partner universities might construct a profile detailing their university-based courses and their students’ learning needs and form a partnership with another lecturer and student cohort offering curriculum resources to meet those needs. All partner universities are being asked to provide an administrator to work on the \textit{i-TKNe} project and a list of proposed units, courses or modules to be offered by this UNE learning management system.

UNE’s \textit{i-TKNe} project differs from the Western Sydney-Ningbo teacher education partnership in a number of aspects. First, the Western Sydney-Ningbo teacher education partnership relinquishes the university monopoly on teacher education to engage students in work-based teacher-researcher education based on curriculum negotiated and delivered by the national and international partners. Second, given they each of the partner universities already have established learning management systems, the challenge for UNE’s \textit{i-TKNe} project is the actual creation of intellectual partnerships that directly enable lecturers to negotiate curriculum content and pedagogies. However, the project’s \textit{i-TKNe} curriculum promises to have non-Western theoretical knowledge produced, exchanged and reported by students in response to their own institution’s assessment schedule. Further, the UNE \textit{i-TKNe} project is exploring issues concerning intellectual property that will allow collaboration with partner universities for the uploading of their intellectual property onto the UNE learning management system. One this is done, this will enable lecturers to jointly develop curriculum resources.
so they can be entered into UNE’s *i-TKNe* archive for use by others. Beyond archiving the courses of partner universities, *i-TKNe* is also undertaking to provide opportunities for language education and the transnational exchange of theoretical knowledge between local and international students.

In effect, UNE’s *i-TKNe* project promises to facilitate the internationalization of the curriculum in two ways. First, it is expected to provide a UNE-based learning management system to facilitate local and international student collaboration in ways which transcend the restrictions of their enrolment in particular Australian universities. Second, *i-TKNe* is intended to garner curriculum resources from partner universities to permit communication between local and international students, the kind of which belongs to the realm of intercultural understanding. However, at the moment it is unclear how such technology (a learning management system), in and of itself, could enable the more sophisticated pedagogies of intellectual equality whereby national and international partners in teacher education work with local and international students to stimulate languages education and the exchange non-Western theoretical knowledge in Australia.

**Conclusion**

The 1990 Asia literacy agenda was grounded in economic concerns, with Asian language education envisaged as enhancing Australia’s economic position in the Asia-Pacific. Asia literacy emerged with regional trade blocs such as the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation forum (APEC) and certain Asian economies were exhibiting spectacular rates of growth. Australia was threatened with being locked out of trade with both North America and Asia. However, the link between Australian school children engaging in the study of Asian languages and Australia’s trade with the Asia-Pacific was tenuous. For some Australians the envisaged cultural change was frightening and resisted. While exports to Asia sustained Australia’s rural communities, arguments for Asian language studies were nonetheless questioned. However, that Australia’s economic performance has continued to rely on the Asian economies and in particular China, has vindicated the view that the proposal for languages education associated with Asia literacy continue to be necessary.

Despite the debates over Asia literacy, what the link between the internationalization of Australian higher education and the nation’s economic performance requires by way of changes in curriculum structures is now a little clearer. The Asia literacy agenda attempted to enhance the linguistic capacities of Australians to engage Asia offshore. As such it shared an uneasy trajectory and came to be resented by those keen on reviving ‘White Australia politics’. The internationalization of Australian higher education, however, is grounded in the local presence of non-Western international students, mostly from Asia, making the economic goals more tangible and the consequences of failing to achieve them more evident. Further, even more tangible now is the relationship between the cultural and economic needs for Australia to be part of the twenty-first ‘Asian’ century. The kinds
of Orientalist and colonialist responses to international students which informed the response to Asia literacy are having a negative economic impact upon Australia’s higher education sector. Assaults upon Indian students and questionable quality assurance in the provision of vocational education by private providers have received global media attention. This has contributed to the downward movement in the demand for Australian higher education from South Asia. As a result of the drop in demand by international students, Monash University shed around 300 staff in 2010. Sector-wide a major ‘retreat’ of international students could lead to a loss of around 36,000 jobs and a collapse in $7 billion in revenue.

There are doubts regarding the quality of courses offered in Australian higher education. These courses are subject to audit and regulation by various government and professional agencies. However, the notion of quality has yet to be expanded to include students’ bilingual capabilities and engagement with the non-Western theoretical knowledge which non-Western students (international, migrant and refugee alike) can bring to their studies and that of their Australian peers in this country. Pedagogically, this is necessary given Australia’s self-proclaimed student-centred philosophy of quality teaching which is supposedly grounded in the principle of engaging students’ knowledge and prior learning. Moreover, the marginalization of non-Western theoretical knowledge made potentially available through international students in Australian higher education is questionable when they pay to participate in courses which universities ‘sell’ as being global and international.

In an international market reliant upon student satisfaction and which benefits from word of mouth recruitment, the failure to engage the bilingual capabilities and the theoretical knowledge available to non-Western international students places the project of internationalizing Australian higher education at a competitive disadvantage internationally. This is a market in which Australia now has to compete as never before against other English speaking ‘Western’ nations such as the USA and the UK. More importantly it is a market in which Australia competes against China and other Asian nations for international students at a time when the attraction of Australian higher education is arguably being diminished on a number of fronts. The Study in China website reveals that approximately fourteen per cent of the international students in China come from Europe and ten per cent from the USA in addition to the seventy-three per cent from Asia. With this, Australian higher education must begin to ask: what is the knowledge that non-Western countries like China are now selling the world? Answers to this question are not difficult to find. Moreover, Study in China site states:

China leads or approaches the world’s advanced level in many branches of science and technology, for instance in the field of biological science and astronomy … The Chinese government is adjusting old policies and enacting new ones to make China a better place for international students.
In this respect and in the context of China’s intellectual engagement with Western knowledge, the Western Sydney-Ningbo teacher-researcher education partnership is a response that involves adjusting old Australian teacher education programs and pedagogies and enacting new ones. This entails developing national/international partnership-based teacher education employing pedagogies of intellectual equality. While still learning from the mistakes of the Asia literacy agenda, the Western Sydney-Ningbo teacher-researcher education partnership provides insights into much needed innovation in Australian teacher education, which includes developing Australia’s capabilities for languages education and engagement with non-Western theoretical knowledge.

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Endnotes


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