

# Introduction: Dialogues about the Local and the Global in education

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Education in most parts of Oceania draws heavily on Western concepts, practices and theories. This is certainly the case in the island nations and territories of the Pacific and in the delivery of education to the Indigenous peoples of New Zealand and Australia. Even in recent years, education reform agendas have reflected Western values and models at management, curriculum and pedagogic levels. The colonial inheritance lives on in the Pacific, especially through the provision of advanced training in English-speaking countries and in development assistance programs that assume the primacy of Western values and practices in education.

Regrettably, reform agendas have not always met with success (Puamau & Teasdale, 2007). We, therefore, need to reflect on the role of local cultures in the implementation of reforms and reconsider their congruity with the socio-economic and political landscapes of Oceania. Chen's (2010), *Asia as method*, reminds us of the danger of uncritical adoption of theories, such as those from the West. He argues that establishing dialogue between Western and Local theories leads to a deeper understanding, moving us beyond a simple Local/Global binary divide. We need to expand our perspectives, engage with complexity, and seek approaches to research that are grounded in the Local yet embedded in the Global, thus achieving, at least to some extent, the internationalist localism that Chen advocates.

This issue of the journal is based on an OCIES-sponsored program for Early Career Researchers (ECRs). The program has established an academic alliance of ECRs to explore educational issues in Oceania and Asia through the lens of local knowledges, wisdoms and theories, helping us to de-centre ourselves from an obsession with the West and Western epistemologies. Philip Chan and Hongzhi Zhang are the conveners, and Bob Teasdale and Zane Ma Rhea have acted as mentors of the program.

In early 2017, we received a fellowship and network grant of A\$5,000 from the Oceania Comparative and International Education Society (OCIES) for this initiative, under the title: *ECR Connect: Examining Oceania education issues in international and comparative perspective*. The program sought to establish an ECR network in OCIES and to encourage publication in the OCIES journal. We organised a symposium in the Faculty of Education, Monash University, on 26 June 2017. Bob Teasdale presented a background paper to guide discussions. Six papers then were presented by ECRs from different nations in Oceania. Presenters received immediate peer feedback to help strengthen the quality of their papers. Two symposiums were organised at the 2017 OCIES annual conference in Noumea, New Caledonia. Again, presenters received valuable suggestions

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for their papers. The final manuscripts of these papers now have been peer-reviewed and are presented in this special issue of the journal.

The issue contains nine papers by emerging scholars from Australia, China, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Taiwan, and the Pacific. In the opening paper, *Researching and theorising the Local in education: Perspectives from Oceania and Asia*, Zhang, Chan, and Teasdale explore the role of local knowledges and wisdoms in educational research. They draw on Chen's idea of "internationalist localism" to explore relationships between local wisdom and traditional cultures in Oceania and Asia, and Western theories of education. The authors provide examples from Oceania, Asia, and Australia. The paper seeks to provide a theoretical underpinning for this special issue.

The second paper is by Donella Cobb: *Placing the spotlight on Open Educational Resources: Global phenomenon or cultural guise?* She posits that Open Educational Resources are considered an alternative platform to achieving cost-effective teacher education in low-income countries. However, when she examined the Open Education Resources for English Language Teachers (ORELT) teacher education modules, she discovered that they actually support the socialisation of teachers into Western culture, values and beliefs. Her paper challenges the assumption that Open Educational Resources are a socially neutral pedagogic platform and raises questions about the educational and cultural implications for local contexts.

Tuia, a Samoan academic, has explored: *The impact of Samoa's pre-service teacher education system on student teachers learning*, arguing that the influence of New Zealand and Australia has dominated the administration of policy assistance in postcolonial Samoa. He believes that pre-service teachers are faced with a dilemma when trying to fit into the current training system. The paper draws on interview data to illustrate how the teacher education curriculum lacks relevance to the Samoan context. The paper concludes that, in Samoa, local educational needs must be addressed, and the teacher education system should be more inclusive of local values and knowledge.

Paulsen's paper: *Relationships, relationality, and schooling: Opportunities and challenges for Pacific Islander learners in Melbourne's western suburbs*, traces the living experiences of a group of Pacific Islander (PI) learners in Melbourne between 2012 and 2015. The paper examines the ways that PI learners engage and interact with various players within their hosted home and school environment, and how these relationships affect their academic achievements. The paper argues that complex relationship customs and relationality patterns can lead to both positive and negative impacts on learning for some PI learners.

In their paper, *Understanding the Local in Indigenous Taiwan*, Nesterova and Jackson question the idea of the Local, given that Indigenous people do not necessarily all hold similar views about local Indigeneity and its place in the educational development in Taiwan. They analyse the case from the historical context of Indigenous people to contemporary views and perspectives on Indigeneity, Indigenous development and education. The paper concludes by considering the implications of these understandings for Taiwan's development and education.

Trinh explores education in Vietnam. Her paper, *Local dimensions under the impacts of imperialism, colonialism, and neo-liberalism of globalisation: Insights from the Vietnamese education system*, reviews relevant literature on Vietnamese education reforms and internationalization policies. In particular, she explores the role of the Local,

finding that it was characterized by responses such as adaptation, appropriation, creativity, nationalism, and patriotism in the imperial and colonial times. From thematic analysis of documented literature and relevant policies, the local dimensions of the Vietnamese education system were identified as diverse and varying.

Fa'avae's paper, *Complex times and needs for locals: Strengthening (local) education systems through education research and development in Oceania*, posits that the Local is a consistent concern linked to colonization in the Pacific. He reports indigenous academics contributing to decolonization discourse linked to disrupting Western research ideals and practice. The author highlights the role of his institute in a regional university focused on privileging local and Indigenous knowledges as strengths, and working together with regional and international agencies to support and strengthen local education systems in Oceania. This paper argues that there is an existing and increasing local body of work and expertise seeking to disrupt the out-dated colonial systems; this work is mobilizing Indigenous knowledge and research in the moana.

Chan's paper, *Cross-border education for pupils of kindergartens and schools: The case of Hong Kong*, reports a unique case of young children migrating between two cultures, two languages and two regions (China and Hong Kong) each day. The paper explores equality issues faced by these 28,000 students who cross the border to attend public schools in Hong Kong. Chen evaluates the results of various stakeholders working together to solve some important issues, for example, dedicated school zones, immigration clearance services, setting up Hong Kong classes in Chinese schools, and language, communication, and cultural support. The paper argues that the battle to overcome inequality continues.

The final contribution, *Acknowledging the legitimacy of local practices: A study of communication challenges between Chinese and Australian university students*, by God and Zhang, reports how Chinese international students understand and deal with difficulties in communication with host students at an Australian university in relation to different English practices. Their findings show that Chinese students tend to consider their own practices as less legitimate than those of the Australians. Since intercultural communication is a process of negotiating shared meanings based on each other's Local, linguistically and culturally, without acknowledgment of the legitimacy of their own local practices, Chinese students may find it difficult to utilize language and cultural resources to communicate with their Australian peers.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This special issue was energized by a remarkable group of emerging scholars and their mentors. As special issue guest editors, we express our sincere gratitude to all those who joined us on our journey of learning. We are particularly grateful to the final contributors for their enthusiasm and persistence over two years. We would like to thank the OCIES for financing this productive ECR Connect project. We thank OCIES members attending the 2017 annual conference for generously sharing their insights and responding thoughtfully to the papers presented. Philip and Hongzhi are indebted to Bob Teasdale for his excellent mentoring and timely assistance. We also express gratitude to Zane Ma Rhea for her guidance and efficient liaison with us.

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