International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives

THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION JOURNAL: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

The IEJ: Comparative Perspectives, published bi-annually, is an international, open-to-air and hardcopy journal for advancing the academic quality and rigor in comparative and international education research. It is the official journal of the Australian and New Zealand Comparative and International Education Society (ANZCIES). The IEJ seeks to promote discussion of the relationships among educational policy and practice, theory, and cross-disciplinary 'global' studies. A further intent is to integrate research findings from comparative, international, and global issues in education that place particular emphasis on cultural contexts.

The IEJ: Comparative Perspectives offers a blind-refereed, peer review process that meets Australia's Department of Education, Science, and Training (DEST) compliance standards. Editorial correspondence, including manuscripts for submission and books for review, are submitted electronically. Details concerning the preparation and submission of articles can be found online at *http://www.iejcomparative.org/*.

The journal is published twice a year. These two issues constitute one volume.

Published by Shannon Research Press, Adelaide.

Printed by ANZCIES, The University of New England, Armidale 2351, Australia.

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International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives, 2011, 10(1), 1-2.
ISSN 1443-1475 © 2011 *Shannon Research Press*. http://iejcomparative.org

From the Editor

In recent years, bibliometrics has been used to measure the utility of publications by means of systematically counting the amount of times a publication has been cited. This could not have been carried out without the use and accessibility of information electronically on the Internet. The intent of bibliometrics is to legitimise, justify, and acknowledge 'quality' information coming from credible sources, but it has also introduced the study of scholarly research performance, which has resulted in some rather unfortunate consequences. Among other things, it has been found that research performance and impact cannot be measured by the quantity of publications or by a ranking of impact factors relating to journals.

The Excellence in Research for Australia initiative, which was cancelled in May 2011 by the Honourable Kim Carr, Minister of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, ranked the IEJ: Comparative Perspectives as a 'B' ranked journal which, to our relief, was a rank which we believed we deserved. However, as research quantums became prominent from 2007 onward, the IEJ was pleased to sponsor a special edition in 2008 and edited by Jan Currie that explored the drawbacks and unforeseen consequences of benchmarking research quantums. As the editor of the IEJ during this time period, I have found a number of interesting changes in the way bibliometrics and journal rankings have undermined what I consider to be quality research. First, there is the fact that, with our online submission facility, submissions have grown significantly with a number of them having to be rejected and/or delayed because the editorial staff has struggled to keep up with demand. Second is the sheer volume of articles coming from the developing world where English is the second or third language. This circumstance suggests that a high proportion of authors have sought recognition in English-oriented journals for their scholarly writings and may be using the IEJ as a springboard for achievement. I cannot tell you how many times I received a friendly email with the plea that publication is critical for either promotion or employment. This added a greater sense of responsibility and burden, which I and my editing associates have shouldered for four years. Finally, there is the fact that I have found reviewers increasingly critical when they consider submissions. While I do not have any conclusive evidence to suggest that reviewers also shouldered the responsibility of accepting 'quality' research, I have found that the whole ranking exercise has transformed the way we review research in the field. While some may consider this to be healthy, I would like to sound a word of caution, as much of the critical analysis and constructive criticism have undermined a lot of promising research.

The issue before you is comprised of excellent research in comparative and international education. While ANZCIES has only recently taken over the IEJ: Comparative Perspectives as its flagship journal, we are making more strident efforts in improving open access to these and previous issues, as we would like to help promote promising and 'quality' research coming from this part of the world.

Brian Denman

Editor-In-Chief

International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives, 2011, 10(1), 3-19.
ISSN 1443-1475 © 2011 *Shannon Research Press*. http://iejcomparative.org

Addressing the UN Millennium Development Goals

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In 2000, the United Nations adopted eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed to by 189 Heads of Government at the UN World Development Summit. This paper examines the background to the development of the MDGs and the progress made towards achieving them. In the struggle to halve extreme poverty, to achieve universal primary education and to achieve other MDGs by 2015, progress is, at best, patchy. Some MDGs may be achievable, given sustained global political support, strong partnerships and well-co-ordinated effort, but other MDGs and the strategies being used need to be rethought. In this paper, issues relating to poverty; political will; quality and equality; partnerships; goals, targets, indicators and monitoring progress; and the effectiveness of poverty reduction strategies are examined. Finally, some ways in which international and comparative educational research can make a difference are suggested.

[Key words: Millennium Development Goals, poverty, basic education, assessment, indicators, monitoring]

Introduction

In 2000, 189 Heads of State and Government from all over the world met at the United Nations Summit in New York and signed the Millennium Declaration, and at a special session of the UN General Assembly, eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) stemming from the Summit were adopted. In 2008, governments reaffirmed their commitment to achieving the MDGs by 2015.

The MDGs were subdivided into 18 targets, for which 48 performance indicators were identified. The overarching MDG set at the Summit was that of halving extreme poverty by 2015. For education, the key MDG is that of ensuring that all children everywhere will be able to complete a full course of primary education by 2015 – it being generally accepted that this is pre-requisite for meeting other MDGs.

The MDGs set in 2000 are not new: they encapsulate UN-inspired efforts to achieving goals that are crucial if poverty is eradicated and development is to be sustainable. For the most part, the UN conferences and normative instruments generated at the end of the 20th century drew on, and sought to extend, the work

done by the founders of the UN system, and in particular, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For example, UNICEF, was the prime mover behind the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNESCO played a leading role in the effort to achieve the goals set at the 1990 World Conference on Education for All and again in 2000 at Dakar. UNDP has focussed on poverty as the major obstacle to development and played a key role at the Millennium Development Summit in 2000.

To generate strategies to achieve the MDGs agreed at the Summit, Kofi Annan, as Secretary-General of the UN, commissioned the Millennium Project. Ten thematic task forces were set up to undertake research and analysis and to produce recommendations for meeting the MDGs, and the Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) stemming from the Project have become key components of development policy.

UN agencies (such as UNDP, FAO, UNESCO, UNICEF and WHO) along with other key players (such as the World Bank, OECD, ODAs) work with a wide range of partners to support MDG programs, to build institutional capacity, and to monitor and report progress. At the country level, MDGs are tailored to local circumstances and challenges by national task forces.

Progress Towards Achieving MDGs

UNDP's assessment (2009) of the progress achieved thus far is as follows:

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
Globally, the goal of cutting in half the proportion of people living on less than $1 per day (revised recently to $1.25 in 2005 prices) by 2015 remains within reach, due largely to an extraordinary improvement in the situation in Asia, and particularly in China. The number of people living in extreme poverty fell from 1.8 billion in 1990 to 1.4 billion in 2005. Little progress has been made in reducing extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa (poverty rate still hovers around 58%), and the transition economies are still recovering from the rise in poverty in the early 1990s.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
Globally, participation in primary education has risen steadily and the number of children who were out-of-school has fallen. Progress is being made towards universal primary education (UPE), but too slowly to meet the 2015 target. Net enrolment ratio for primary education in developing countries increased from 83 per cent in 2000 to 88 per cent in 2007, and the number of children out of school fell by 33 million. While many developing countries are close to achieving UPE, there are still 72 million children whose right to basic education is being denied. By 2015, it is estimated that there will still be at least 29 million children out-of-school.

Goal 3: Promote gender equity and empower women
The progress made towards achieving UPE in Southern Asia, also has ensured that significant progress has been made towards gender equity in this region

since 2000, while Sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia and Northern Africa are making progress. On the other hand, there seems to have been a deterioration in gender parity in primary school enrolments in Oceania. In western and central Africa, girls tend to drop out early. Poverty, drought, food shortages, armed conflict and HIV-AIDS contribute to low school enrolment and high drop out rates for both boys and girls, but prove to be especially devastating for girls.

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

In 2006, for the first time, annual deaths among children under five dropped below 10 million. A child born in a developing country is 13 times more likely to die within the first five years than a child born in an industrialised country. About half of the preventable deaths among children are in sub-Saharan Africa. Between 1990 and 2006, some 27 countries made no progress in reducing childhood deaths. Mortality rates are higher for children from rural and poor families and whose mothers lack a basic education.

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Maternal mortality remains high across much of the developing world. In 2005, more than 500,000 women died during pregnancy, childbirth or within six weeks after delivery, all but a handful of these deaths being in developing countries. Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia account for 86 per cent of maternal deaths, a woman's risk of dying from preventable complications of pregnancy and childbirth being 1:22 compared to 1:7,300 in developed regions.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Every day, about 7,500 people are infected with HIV, and nearly 5,500 die from AIDS, mostly due to a lack of HIV prevention and treatment services. Given improvements in prevention programs, the number of people newly infected with HIV declined from 3 million in 2001 to 2.7 million in 2007; and with the expansion of antiretroviral treatment the number dying from AIDS fell from 2.2 million in 2005 to 2.0 million in 2007. However, because newly infected people are surviving longer, the number living with HIV rose from 29.5 million in 2001 to 33 million in 2007. Most of these people live in sub-Saharan Africa.

Goal 7: Environmental sustainability

Caron dioxide emission reached 28 billion metric tons in 2005 and has continued upward, resulting in increased atmospheric concentrations of CO_2. Globally, emissions increased by 30 per cent from 1990 to 2005. From 1990 to 2005, changes in emissions ranged from a 38 per cent decline in the Commonwealth of Independent States, to an 82 per cent increase in South–Eastern Asia. Per-capita emissions remain highest in the developed countries (about 12 metric tons per person per year) and lowest in sub-Saharan Africa (about 0.8 metric tons). No area can escape the adverse impact of climate change, but the poles, small islands and the mega deltas of Africa and Asia are especially vulnerable.

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development
Official Development Assistance (ODA) dropped from a high of $197 billion in 2005 to $193.7 billion in 2007, mainly due to a decline in debt relief grants. Excluding debt relief grants, net aid rose by 2.4 per cent in constant dollar terms. At the 2005 UN World Summit, developed countries pledged to increase aid from $80 billion in 2004 to $130 billion in 2010 at 2004 prices. UNDP estimates that bilateral aid and multilateral development institutions will need to increase rapidly over the next three years if developed countries are to meet their commitments by 2010. Non-government organisations, the private sector and a number of what were formerly classed as developing countries are becoming important sources for development assistance.

ISSUES in Assessing the Summit and MDGs

When assessing progress towards the MDGs, we need to understand the obstacles to be faced and to develop better strategies for overcoming them. The latest UNDP Report (2009) highlights the major obstacles:

> progress towards the goals is now threatened by sluggish – or even negative- economic growth, diminished resources, fewer trade opportunities for the developing countries, and possible reductions in aid flows from donor countries. Today, more than ever, the commitment to building the global partnership embodied in the Millennium Declaration must guide our collective efforts…we know that the goals are achievable with global political support, strong partnerships and co-ordinated efforts…we also know that if some trends persist, some of the goals will be very difficult to reach.

Peace, a healthy economic context, global political support, strong partnerships and co-ordinated effort are indeed necessary conditions for progress to be made towards achieving MDGs and building a global community (Campbell et al. 2006). To these I would add, understanding poverty and resolving the technical and political problems inherent in setting targets and assessing progress.

Understanding poverty

If we are to address poverty, we need to understand what it is means. And what it means depends on whether one is an indigenous Australian living on Palm Island, a nomad from Niger or a beggar on the streets of Calcutta. What it means to be poor is depends very much on the context, on time and place. Definitions of poverty are a case in point. In the 1960s, poverty was defined in terms of income (as did the Millennium Summit). In the 1980s, poverty began to be defined in terms of deprivation, needs and vulnerability. And in the 1990s, UNDP introduced the Human Development Index. Mahbub ul Huq (1997) added what he called the Human Deprivation Index, arguing that far more crippling than income poverty is the poverty of basic human capabilities, a point also made by Sen (1999). Efforts are now being made to take into account distributional differences and to identify the multi-dimensionally poor (UNDP 2008).

Poverty cannot be eliminated through income transfers alone: programs also need to include the building the basic capacities and opening up more opportunities for the poor. The Millennium Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) were developed using a co-operative approach in a process of "analytical deliberation" – a variant of research and client informed policy-making. Thus PRSs for helping the poor in rural Kenya focussed on providing financial help to buy fertiliser, improve education, health and sanitation in villages; in the slums of Mumbai, the PRSs were more about empowerment, about building the capacity to negotiate with the city government. Grammen Bank micro-credit programmes in Bangladesh and elsewhere tackle both income poverty (through loans) and capacity poverty (through training). Studies of poverty reduction strategies in Asia and Eastern Europe demonstrate that institutional coherence, competent economic governance and strong government presence in the strategic planning are key components of effective poverty reduction policies (Harber 2002; Henderson & Hulme 2002; Sachs 2005).

Much the same is true for Education for All (EFA). In Kenya and the Philippines, showed that school-meals led to a significant increase in school attendance and reduction in drop-outs. In India, young local women were given a short training program and provided child-friendly assistance to poorly performing children for two hours per day, significantly improving their school performance. Overall, education interventions need to be based on an expanded and more inclusive concept of basic learning needs, one that goes beyond UPE, a deeper understanding of the needs sub-national groups and a focus on inputs that matter to them, a multi-sectoral approach, and new strategies for leveraging resources (Power 2007a).

Almost all of the families from which children who have never been to primary school or who drop early, suffer from preventable diseases, are malnourished, and are desperately poor. Poor families are concentrated in nations and communities caught in what Sachs (2005) calls the "poverty trap." The key problem is that when poverty is extreme, the poor (families, communities and nations) do not have the ability (by themselves) to get out of the trap.

In 89 of the 103 developing countries surveyed by UNESCO in 2005, primary education is not free, and the poor simply cannot afford to pay the fees. Free basic education is not only a human right, but also, a necessary condition for participation by the children of the poor. In rural areas and slums where most families are hungry, disease- ridden and desperately poor, child labour often seems to illiterate parents to be a necessary condition for survival. It has only been when basic education is free and real incentives are put in place that their children, especially their daughters, attend school. And it is only when issues of income poverty and capability poverty are addressed that the poor can begin to triumph over adversity.

One of the reasons for the poverty in many developing countries is a "demographic trap." Generally speaking, impoverished families have lots of

children. The reasons are understandable. It is the only form of "insurance" in poor families when infant mortality is high. But the results can be disastrous. Families cannot afford to invest in the nutrition, health and education of each child. Rapid population growth also puts enormous stress on the environment, exacerbating poverty. Almost all of the countries that experienced negative economic growth since the 1980s are low-income countries with high fertility rates. High population growth leads to deeper poverty and stunted development, and deeper poverty contributes to high fertility rates.

Girls and women in most poor parts of the world are locked into a cycle of poverty and early marriages, with illiterate mothers bring up illiterate daughters who are married off early into yet another cycle of poverty, illiteracy, high fertility and early mortality. Breaking this cycle requires more than educational interventions: comprehensive development that transforms the basic conditions of rural and slum community life is needed. Education needs to be part of this transformation, but providing other basic infrastructure elements (water wells, fuel supply, health clinics, roads) are necessary, not to speak of micro-credit, improved employment and income-earning opportunities (UNESCO 1995, 2002, 2005, 2009).

The key to breaking out of this trap is basic education for girls and women. Education that empowers girls and women with the knowledge and skills to more easily make fertility choices (instead of having these choices made solely by their husbands of family) makes the difference: it allows them to more easily join the labour force and/or to contribute to increasing productivity in the village, to space childbirth, improve health and nutrition so that their children survive (Jha 2009). Countries that are escaping the poverty trap have low fertility rates and their economic growth now exceeds population growth. Their girls stay at school at least until they are 15 or 16, most of their women are now literate, and they have made significant progress towards closing gender gaps (Klasen 2002; UNESCO 1995, 2009).

Political will, affordability and the market

According to Sen (2007), the major obstacles to meeting the MDGs by 2015 are "unaffordability" and the lack of "political will." The reality is that most poor nations simply cannot afford to meet the education, health, sanitation and other basic needs of all. Poor nations may need better governance, to combat corruption and to devote more of their resources to the alleviation of poverty, education and health - and as do rich countries. But most of all, poorest countries and the disadvantaged need help and a fair go, if they are to have any chance of meeting their MDG targets.

The ODA policies of rich countries as well as those of the governments of poor countries must ensure that the needs of those who are most vulnerable are given priority. But the political will to support MDG programmes is weak as is evident in all of the countries that have failed to meet their promises. Many years ago, the UN set a target of 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income for the

amount of ODA to be given by developed nations. Countries like Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Sweden have consistently met their international ODA obligations. But in most affluent countries (including Australia), ODA levels have been below 3 per cent for years, and have either stagnated or declined. Aid to all areas of education rose at the beginning of the 2000s, reaching $US5.5 billion in 2006. It fell to $4.3 billion in 2007, and is likely to drop by at least another $1 billion by 2010. While $11 billion is needed to attain EFA, aid for basic education was just $2.5 billion in 2007, less than one quarter of the amount needed (UNESCO 2009).

Moreover, much of the "aid" given is "tied aid" serving the "donor" nation's economic or political interests. For example, only about 20 per cent of Australia's ODA in recent years has been devoted to basic education, health, safe water and sanitation, and an even smaller percentage of its bilateral aid goes to the Least Developed Countries, the very poorest countries.

To compound the problem, poor countries have been forced to adopt policies stemming from the ideology of the market. In the 1980s, World Bank economists argued that free, state-supported education was dysfunctional for development, and increasingly called for the imposition of school fees and privatisation of the education system (Arnove et al. 1992). The structural adjustment policies and education priorities pushed by the IMF, the World Bank and Washington brought with them tough austerity measures, heavy debt burdens and unfair trade conditions. For the most part, these measures did nothing to alleviate poverty. They inflicted an even greater burden on the poor, and they undermined the capacity of the governments of poor countries to manage their own affairs and to deliver programmes to the poor (Samoff 1994; Stiglitz 2002).

Even in developed countries, privatisation, "user pay", de-regulation and an obsession with competition boil down to cutting investment in public education, health, housing, social services and development assistance. The market ideology serves the interests of the rich and powerful, an ideology that has been a disaster for education, health and the environment. Governments cannot leave it to market forces to create a better world or to some kind of self-regulation when things go seriously wrong. As indeed they have.

The social democratic governments of Europe have chosen a different path. They see it as the responsibility of government to develop policies and programs that are affordable and serve the common good, and to keep in place a system of checks and balances essential to ensuring that development is sustainable and basic rights are protected. The Nordic countries, in particular, have high quality, equitable and efficient public education, health and social welfare systems, and have earned their reputation as good global citizens. Their ODA programmes, like those of the UN, are based on a human rights rather than a market perspective. They have moved from donor-dominated loans and aid towards partnerships for development (UNESCO 1996).

It seems a simple matter to find the hundreds of billions of dollars needed to design and amass ever more powerful weapons and to wage wars, but impossible to find the much smaller amounts needed to create the conditions in which extremism, conflict and grinding poverty are minimised, that is, to fund programmes designed to meet MDGs and to support UN efforts to create a culture of peace. If we are to address the causes of poverty, polarisation, violence and climate change, we do need to work towards creating a fairer and more humane global economic system, and to pressure governments to assume their global responsibilities.

National interest and the common good

In everyday life, we think it is wrong for individuals to consider only their own interests and not to take into account the interests of all those affected by their actions. The UN is predicated on the belief that the same ethical principles should apply globally. Indeed, our very survival has become increasingly dependent on the extent to which all countries behave as 'good international citizens'.

Achieving the MDGs requires concerted action by rich countries as well as the poor. The poor countries are expected to take ending poverty and other MDGs seriously by devoting a greater share of their national resources to basic education, health services, sanitation, and less to arms, corruption and political infighting. Rich countries are expected to move beyond the platitudes of helping the poor and follow through on their promises to deliver more real help. But as Sachs (2005) puts it, today's situation is "a shadow play." Many poor countries pretend to reform while rich countries pretend to help them. The aid agencies, for their part, often focus on symbolic projects - just big and bold enough to make headlines and to look good, but nowhere near enough or long enough to make a real difference.

Thus the gap between promises and reality remains as wide as ever. All too often, immediate national political interests take precedence over the long-term common good. We have seen how often political leaders, the so-called "political realists," appeal to the "national interest" and panda to fears and prejudices within society when seeking to gain or retain power. Elections have to be won; the vested interests of the big, the wealthy and the powerful served; the voices of dissent and the whistleblower silenced. In the "national interest," it is deemed to be perfectly acceptable to override or compromise international obligations, mechanisms and conventions if these prove to be "inconvenient truths." And spin-doctors, lobby groups, institutes and think tanks funded by those with vested interests in the outcomes of "research" have a field day.

Building political will requires a shift in political ideology, one embraces the view that it is in the national interest, in terms of a country's reputation, self-respect, security and future prosperity to work towards ends that "are inherently valuable, to seek improved standards worldwide in human rights and equal opportunity…to seek to crush the drug trade…to assist through substantial aid

programs the economic and social development of those countries struggling with debt, poverty or national calamity" (Evans 1989).

Quality and equity

In seeking to eliminate poverty, one must address issues of quality and equity. For its part, UNESCO (2005) has refused to choose between quality and equality, arguing that quality and equality are inseparable and must go forward together, each strengthening the other. To participate in the knowledge society of the 21st century, the basic learning needs of each child need to be met. And the extent to which this happens depends on the quality and relevance of the education provided for that child. Nationally, productivity and progress towards MDGs depends on the extent to which all, and in particular the most disadvantaged and the marginalised, benefit from policies and programmes that are supposed to alleviate poverty and to meet their basic needs, including the right to education.

There are economic theorists (Bluestone & Harrison 2000; Sen 2007; Stiglitz 2002) who argue that inequality impedes economic growth, and that the economic policies pushed as part of the Washington consensus are proving to be unsustainable, socially and economically, in both developed and developing countries. They call for increased levels on investment in inclusive quality education and training, research and development as a necessary condition for sustainable economic growth. To quote a recent UNESCO Ministerial Round Table: "Poor quality education anywhere is bad for humankind as a whole."

Quality is important. Well-designed resource policies have a strong impact on the quality and outcomes of primary education (Power 2007). For example, studies (UNESCO 2005) undertaken in Kenya and the Philippines, showed that school-meals led to a significant increase in school attendance and reduction in drop-outs; and the provision of school textbooks, teacher training and resource materials led to increases in test scores. In India, young local women were given a short training program and provided child-friendly assistance to poorly performing children for two hours per day, significantly improving their school performance. In all countries, the quality of education depends on the quality of teachers.

Quality for all. Inequality often boils down to poorly paid jobs and poor quality health and education services for the masses on the one hand, and high quality education, health and well-paid employment for elites on the other. The research (Pickett & Wilkinson 2009; Power 2003) confirms that inequality is dysfunctional and corrosive. It is the root cause of many of the ills of society and of our planet. A whole range of problems from poor health to educational failure, from mental illness to obesity, from drug abuse to violence, from poverty to racism and terrorism – share one overwhelming feature: they are several times more common in the more unequal societies. The most equitable nations (like Indonesia, Vietnam, Finland and Japan) have much lower levels of violence, illicit drug use, obesity and mental illness and report significantly

higher levels of happiness than those (like Australia, Britain and the United States) where the gaps between the rich and the poor are very large (Pickett & Wilkinson 2009).

Strong partnerships and co-ordinated efforts

Perhaps one can best illustrate the importance of strong partnerships and co-ordinated efforts for MDGs from the experience of UNESCO in developing the Education for All programme. At the beginning of 1989, the education systems of the developing countries were in a state of crisis. They faced formidable problems in meeting the right of all to a decent basic education. Given that their economies were fragile, the austerity measures, debt and structural adjustment policies pushed on them in the 1980s and 1990s severely limited their capacity to meet the basic education needs of all. The data collected by UNESCO indicated that the number of illiterates and children out-of-school was growing. In 1990, there were about 905 million adult illiterates, and some 130 million children of primary school age were not in school. Moreover, the quality of basic education was (and still is) often poor: drop-out and repetition rates were high, and all countries faced problems in meeting the basic learning needs of all (even in OECD countries, functional illiteracy is typically about 20%).

Given this, the UN proclaimed 1990 as International Literacy Year. Recognising that UNESCO had mandate but neither the financial nor the human resources needed to achieve its goals, we worked hard to build alliances between governments and the key multilateral and bilateral organisations concerned with education, development and children. Differences in orientation notwithstanding, UNESCO forged a strategic partnership with UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank in support of basic education for all (EFA). Each agency contributed the funds and staff needed to set up an Inter-Agency Commission, to hold preparatory meetings in each region, to undertake research on key issues in basic education for all, and to support a major international conference on EFA (Jones 2007a).

The World Conference on Education for All was held in Thailand in March, 1990, The Conference was sponsored by the four agencies, co-sponsored by 18 development agencies, and attended by 1,500 participants representing 155 countries and 160 non-government and intergovernmental organisations and the media. The countries and organisations present adopted the World Declaration on Education for All and an agreed Framework of Action to achieve the six goals set out in the Declaration. And over 180 governments confirmed their commitment to the goals of EFA at the 1989 General Conference of UNESCO. An International Consultative Forum representing all key stakeholders was set up in UNESCO to maintain the partnership, and to promote and monitor progress towards EFA.

Building strong and enduring partnerships is not always easy. But strong partnerships and shared commitments proved to be crucial in at all stages of the development of the EFA agenda and programme. The four sponsoring agencies

did have their differences, and there were a few skirmishes along the way (Jones 2007a). Initially, for the World Bank, education for all boiled down to universal primary education. UNESCO's human rights orientation demanded a much broader and perhaps overly ambitious vision, one that also encompassed the rights of the very young, out-of-school youth and adults, and marginalised groups. In the end, we worked our through the differences, the skirmishes and negotiations cementing our relationship and clarifying priorities.

United by the importance of our mission, we joined forces to generate partnerships linking all key stakeholders at the international, regional and national levels to set priorities, develop and implement programs, secure resources needed, and monitor progress. Sure we did not achieve everything we hoped for, but the EFA International Forum has been a strong working partnership, one that has stood the test of time.

At the national level, the primary responsibility for education policy and for defining and meeting national education goals rests with government. Thus the nature and strength of the partnerships established between the international organisations involved in EFA and governments is a key factor in working towards EFA and MDG goals. But to make progress, one needs strong and enduring partnerships, partnerships that are inclusive of all the key stakeholders in education and development working in a country. National EFA Task Forces were set up in almost all developing countries. They set national goals, priorities and targets; developed, co-ordinated and supported EFA projects; and, with the help of the sponsoring agencies, monitored and reported on progress at the national level.

It is important to co-ordinate the efforts of all the key stakeholders in development in a country. For example, in Cambodia after the Pol Pot regime collapsed, at least five agencies spent far more money and time conducting their own independent needs assessments than on delivering programmes. For some UN agencies, development Banks and voluntary agencies, flying one's own flag seems to be more important than working together to ensure that real needs are met. But it made a big difference when all four sponsoring agencies joined forces in meeting with national leaders when we were seeking to strengthen the political will to achieve EFA goals.

Monitoring progress proved to be an important part of maintaining the momentum for EFA. The mid and end-of-decade reviews held in Amman in 1996 and 2000 Dakar helped maintain support for the six EFA goals and principles. Working with education ministries to collect and analyse data and to prepare national reports on progress towards each goal proved to be a very important input for policy makers in the country and for ODAs. Over the past twenty years, assessing and reporting on progress towards EFA has helped to keep basic education high on the policy agenda, and to maintain the pressure on governments and international organisations to keep their promises.

For the most part, had there been no international alliance pushing EFA over the past twenty years, progress towards the education MDGs would have been slower (Power 2006). Sure, not all governments and organisations meet their promises. And as those who have worked in the UN system know full well, international organisations, like their national counterparts, have their weaknesses. We tried, but probably could have done better.

So what can be gleaned from the EFA experience about the types of partnerships that are needed to ensure progress towards achieving MDGs is made?

- **Ownership** - The importance of sound, nationally-owned MDG policies, priorities and targets, and ownership by communities being targeted, teachers and literacy workers
- **Alignment** - Close alignment of funding agency support with national government priorities, commitment to supporting and using national capacity for research, development and training
- **Harmonisation** of donor practice: co-ordination, common arrangements, rationalised procedures and information sharing
- **Sound partnerships** under-pining the use of aid and government funding for education; win-win partnerships and joint agreement on roles and responsibilities
- **A sector-wide approach** is generally more effective than a project approach - projects are rarely successful unless attention is given to the development of administrative and technical capacity of governments and agencies
- **Donors/banks must respect governments and the poor,** demonstrating a willingness to improve basic education through locally determined solutions relevant to the particular context
- **Continuity of engagement** of donors and governments, and the stability of program management and support systems.

Role of civil society and NGOs

In advancing the agenda on the Millennium Summit, the role of civil society and non-government organisations is crucial. Where national leaders are weak, authoritarian or corrupt, people power becomes ever more important. Under apartheid, it was the NGOs that were crucial in the fight against oppression and the delivery of basic services. It was people power that led to the demise of authoritarian regimes and the advance of democracy during the 1980s and 1990s. In the aftermath of September 11, groups within civil society have been pressuring western governments to restore basic rights compromised by recent legislation. And it will be people power that forces governments to reduce greenhouse emissions; to be more transparent and accountable; to reform financial systems; to use established international and legal mechanisms to resolve conflicts and deal with crimes against humanity (Robertson 2006).

The prospects for building a better world are a function of the extent to which citizens, universities, professional organisations, the legal community and the media play and active and effective role in national and international efforts to achieve the MDGs. Certainly in working towards EFA, organisations like the Aga Khan Foundation, Bernard van Leer Foundation, Education International, Oxfam and Save the Children, and universities with strong centres focussing on development proved to be invaluable partners. They provide invaluable feedback on what is happening on the ground, as well as playing a vital role in implementing projects in the slums, villages and remote areas where most of the world's poor live.

Setting goals, targets, and indicators

Research focussing on the technical and political problems of national assessment (Power 1982; Power & Wood 1984a, b), OECD and UNESCO education indicator systems and statistics (Power, 1990), the reform of ISCED and monitoring progress towards EFA goals suggests that those working in the field of international and comparative education have a vital role to play to helping us to understand the nature and origins of the problems to be faced in seeking to define and to assess progress towards MDGs, and to understand why progress is being made in some very poor countries, but not in others.

Whether at the national or international level, agreeing on the goals to be given priority, defining and monitoring progress towards them is a complex and difficult task – politically and technically. Which human rights, which basic needs are to be given priority? UNDP puts poverty alleviation at the top, the World Bank economic growth, UNESCO education, WHO health, ILO employment, UNEP the environment, WFP food, the UN peace and security and so on. The reality is that, like love and marriage, they go together like a horse and carriage: you cannot have one without the other.

Defining MDG goals, priorities and allocating resources are political processes – ideally a democratic one in which the voice of all stakeholders is heard and in which all participate. To this end, World Summits and UN Conferences are valuable. To tackle global problems, we need global commitments, global goals, and global action plans. But, the reality is that the loudest and most powerful voices dominate. Targets and assessments of progress towards them reflect the values and agendas (often hidden) of those who define them. And so they have their weaknesses.

Lee (2007) suggests the following points of dissatisfaction with MDGs, that they:

- Are unrealistic for very poor countries and marginalised groups
- Will not be achieved by 2015, given present aid flows
- Create pessimism towards aid, labelling development efforts as failures
- Are not set in a clearly articulated human rights framework thus ignoring some basic rights and groups

- Are framed in a very restricted notion of poverty and of EFA
- Are formulated without consulting the poor and have practical limitations.

Unfortunately, the core MDG is based on a concept of income poverty. It is a limited concept, one that reflects the agendas of development banks. But the focus on income is inadequate when it comes to tackling the root causes of poverty in all of its multidimensional and diverse manifestations.

All MDG and EFA definitions, indicators and measurement tools have their problems. As the EFA Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO 2002) admitted: "At present the ability to monitor the quality of education is limited and there is a heavy reliance on proxies as distinct from a true assessment of learning outcomes." Remember too that when comparing, one is making a judgment, and that our values determine the attributes assessed, the criteria, goals, standards and norms used in making assessments of progress.

Analyses of the research on national assessment (Power & Wood 1984a, b) and attempts to reform ISCED, OECD and UNESCO statistics and indicator systems (UNESCO 1998, 2005) reveals that much remains to be done to fulfil the hope that MDG and education indicators are reliable, valid measures of what is really important, and even more for them to be comparable and to provide the information needed to improve policy and its implementation. Some of the validity problems relating to using income levels as an indicator of extreme poverty have already been outlined, but there also always errors of measurement associated with any statistic, and statistics of the type used in assessing MDGs provide but a fragment of the information needed to inform poverty and EFA policy.

Data collection in most poor countries is a nightmare. For example, given the way funds are allocated and corruption, there are quite a few phantom schools and teachers – they are "counted" and funds allocated to them but they do not exist. Where schools are real, record keeping is not always a priority: enrolment and expenditure figures may be fudged by principals and Ministry officials. Population statistics and the indicators using them (such as number of out-of-school children) are guesstimates, the funds and expertise needed in poor countries for reliable census-taking, surveys and sampling being in short supply.

"Research" is not always independent. At times, intergovernmental organisations, governments, institutions and lobby groups fund projects and manipulate design and reports to legitimate the spin they wish to give on unemployment rates, carbon emissions, national assessments and position on league tables. In essence, one needs to be vigilant. When comparing progress towards MDGs, one does need to know what the countries being compared have in common and how they differ. One also needs to be sure that operational definitions, sampling, data collection and analysis techniques being used to generate a statistic are indeed comparable and consistent.

All who use indicators, need to remember that indicators are indicators. They are proxies for what we need to know. They are not error free, consistent, valid

measures of what is really important. Thus if a MDG indicator is green, do not assume that progress is really being made. If it is orange, check what it appears to be pointing to. If red, one had better stop immediately and investigate. In all cases, check the indicator. Indicators point, they do not explain what, if anything, is going wrong or if real progress is being made – that is your job as researchers.

Conclusions

The MDGs represent a global partnership between governments and agencies involved in development that grew from the commitments and targets set at world summits and UN conferences during the 1990s. Poor countries have pledged to govern better and to invest in their people through better health care and education; and rich countries have pledged to support them, through increased aid, debt relief and fairer trade.

Despite the limitations of the MDGs and the evidence available, it does seem that progress is being made in many countries, and towards most goals. The Millennium Summit does seem to have made a difference: though patchy, more attention seems to being given to poverty as an issue internationally and nationally, and the UN system has made some progress in co-ordinating efforts to create a better world.

Yet progress is slow, and many of the solemn promises made in 2000 have been broken. Moreover, in the aftermath of the global economic crisis, the gaps between the reality and rhetoric about development aid may become even wider. Most poor countries are already investing less than the required amount to achieve MDGS, and the current economic crisis is eroding their ability to maintain even these levels, and particularly in countries in, or recovering from conflict. For many poor countries and families, remittances are a very importance source of income, often being higher than foreign direct investment and aid flows. These too are likely to drop significantly.

For its part, the comparative and international educational research community (i.e. organisations like ANZCIES) should, on the basis of evidence, play an active role in pushing governments to close the gap between present levels of aid and the UN target of 0.7 per cent. Non-government organisations working to reduce poverty must press aid agencies to ensure that at least half of their aid is targeted towards meeting the MDGs in the poor countries. And at the same time, they need to play an active role in contributing to the improvement of foreign policy and overseas development assistance (ODA) programmes on the basis of the evidence from research.

We need to ensure that the thinking of policy makers on education (Power 2007a, 2007b, 2009) and development takes into account the wisdom of the founding fathers of comparative education. Over 100 years ago, Sir Michael Sadler insisted that a national system of education is a living thing, the outcome of battles and struggles of long ago, and it reflects, while seeking to remedy, the

weaknesses of "national character." Education systems are intimately connected to the societies that support them. Imposing uniform solutions stemming from western theories and worldviews often does more harm than good.

Comparative and international researchers involved in developmental research have an important role to play in addressing the obstacles to achieving MDGs. We do need to studies of the roles played by global organisations and their impact (cf. Jones 2007a, b). We do need comparative studies that help us understand why progress is being made in some cases but not in others. Hopefully, comparative and international research workers will be at the table when efforts are being made to redefine MDGs and refine PRSs. We need scholars with courage to speak out on the basis of evidence. Scholars who understand that national and international systems for addressing MDGs are living things, the outcome of battles and struggles now and long ago. Scholars whose work helps us to reflect on the strengths of international organisations, while seeking to remedy their weaknesses.

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International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives, 2011, 10(1), 20-33.
ISSN 1443-1475 © 2011 *Shannon Research Press*. http://iejcomparative.org

World-systems analysis and comparative education for an uncertain future

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The concept of a global-local dialectic framing comparative educational research, and recently of adopting the concept of 'educational transfer' to understand the associated flows of travelling policies and reforms, are important innovations in the field of comparative research. They facilitate deep exploration of the ways in which educational policies are disseminated, received and implemented, on multiple levels of scale. A key feature of these innovations is the explicit intent to overcome methodological nationalism in comparative research. This paper takes this concern as its starting point to consider the nature and value of world-systems analysis as a framework for such comparative research, emphasising its potential to achieve these goals in distinctive ways. Drawing on Immanuel Wallerstein's theorising, it is argued that this is the framework for our times, requiring historical analyses, and contemporary action, linked to the political quest for a more just, equal and democratic world-system.

[Keywords: Wallerstein, world-systems analysis, capitalism, educational transfer, methodological nationalism]

Introduction

In the broad field of comparative educational research, critiques of world-systems analysis may outnumber efforts to apply this framework to comparative research problems. The critiques are predictable, centred primarily on a claimed macro and economic determinism, and a related lack of attention to local autonomy and agency. Moreover, the approach tends to be characterised as either an example of neo-Marxist theorising no longer relevant to contemporary work, or just one of multiple lines of globalisation research. To date, research from the neo-institutionalist school focused on the convergence of educational policy via a world culture has dominated comparative research adopting a world-level explanatory framework. At the same time, a general approach that takes account of the dialectic between global and local influences on educational policy and practice has arguably incorporated the bulk of

contemporary comparative research.[1] Of particular note here is the innovative work elaborating the nature and mechanisms of the 'educational transfer' of travelling policy reforms and ideas. Where does a world-systems analysis approach based on Immanuel Wallerstein's theorising fit into the field, and what can it offer comparative researchers in contemporary times?

In this paper I approach this question by first reviewing two aspects of contemporary research: 1) the educational transfer approach as part of an over-arching global-local dialectic and move to overcome methodological nationalism; and 2) a concern of some comparative scholars to apply comparative research to contemporary political problems confronting the world. I then turn to world-systems analysis in comparative education, noting the dominance of world culture perspectives that largely avoid assessments and normative political advocacy. I conclude by reviewing the world-systems analysis of Immanuel Wallerstein, arguing that it provides a framework for comparative research that is firmly focused on historical analyses of social reality, in their totality, its current transition toward an alternative world-system, and the role of intellectual activity and research in this process. As a long-standing and well developed framework, I argue that world-systems analysis' time has truly arrived, with critical implications for our comparative research endeavours.

Educational Transfer, Methodological Nationalism and the Global-Local Dialectic

The concept of 'educational transfer' has developed in recent years as a major and innovative theoretical perspective within the field of comparative education, led by researchers like Gita Steiner-Khamsi (2010) who cites its potential to overcome methodological nationalism through careful and innovative case-study work. Indeed, the adoption of a "globalization optique" in the study of local reforms, and multi-level contextual comparisons "as a tool to understand – rather than abstract from – the context" are raised as contemporary advances for comparative methodology (Steiner-Khamsi 2010, p.326). The attention to the unit of analysis for comparative research, and need to contextualise local/national case-studies in ways that take account of influences beyond national borders, reflects a wider shift in the social sciences under the broad banner of globalisation, and perhaps the debates within globalisation theorising over its nature and impact on the nation-state (see Arnove 2009). In the field of comparative education in particular, this has involved the

[1] In the sense that research advocating purely global or local approaches, without any reference to the other, are few. This is similar to Epstein's (2008, 380) characterisation of the epistemological boundaries of comparative work, with most work occupying "the vast middle ground" of historical functionalism, while purely positivist or relativist studies remain the exception.

development of research that takes account of a global-local dialectic in understanding systems and policy reforms (e.g. Arnove & Torres 2003).

In a review of the multiple theories and methodological frameworks within the study of educational transfer, Perry and Tor (2009) identify a number of varied emphases and approaches under its banner. The concept of educational transfer is presented as transcending explanatory accounts of intentional and unidirectional policy borrowing or lending, in favour of an approach that incorporates phenomena like: lesson drawing; indirect mechanisms of policy transmission and reception; the ideational, covert and implicit dissemination of educational ideas, concepts and discourses; and the explicit and direct imposition of models, structures or practices (Perry & Tor 2009, p.510). They argue that the critical contribution of this research is its capacity to identify the varied types or processes of educational transfer, and the specific mechanisms by which this transfer occurs, without falling into the methodological nationalism common in micro-level studies.

In this sense, the broad concept of educational transfer aligns with the wider global-local framework, whereby local policy reforms and practices are explained and understood in terms of trans-national or global influences interacting with local conditions in specific historical contexts. This characteristic can be seen in Steiner-Khamsi's (2005) study, for example, which examines the active borrowing of a voucher-based approach to teacher education in Mongolia. In this case, she explores how local educational actors refer to and make use of the idea of this international educational reform, for multiple reasons and purposes beyond that contained within the reform itself. What is crucial in Steiner-Khamsi's (2004, 2005, 2010) work is the move to incorporate the complex interactions of global-local influences on policy formation, implementation and actual practice, but also to adopt a comparative approach that includes historical analysis of local contexts and conditions to make sense of local actions and the form and nature of the transfer under investigation. Most recently, Steiner-Khamsi (2010, p.331) elaborates the argument that national policy makers almost inevitably make references to "globalization" or "international standards" as part of the process of justifying local reforms, these terms being part of the "global speak" that constitute one side of policy makers' bilingualism, while in practice alternative policies are implemented locally. Globalisation is thus presented less as an external force or influence defining and imposing local change, and more as something "internally induced … [that] … reflects, more than anything else, the domestic policy context. Its meaning is determined domestically" (Steiner-Khamsi 2010, p.332).

This line of argument highlights the process by which policies become global over extended periods of time, becoming completely deterritorialised in the process, and how these travelling or global policies are then frequently adopted and adapted, or at times simply referred to, to by local policy makers. Policy convergence remains at a superficial level then, as local practices may in fact

bare little resemblance to the 'global' policy intent. On this point, Steiner-Khamsi (2010, p.332) presents educational transfer as diametrically opposed to neo-institutionalist accounts of educational reforms, given that convergence is often "merely "global speak," instrumentally invoked at a particular time and in a particular policy context, to accelerate policy change" (Steiner-Khamsi 2010, p.332). Educational transfer as an explanatory framework demands we take greater account of local conditions, politics, histories, and contexts. Despite the rejection of a neo-institutionalist framework, this should not be seen as a rejection of international, or transnational, or (deterritorialised) global influences on local policy reforms. Even if only invoked as "global speak" to justify alternative reforms at home, the deterritorialised global reform agenda is playing a role, and often an important legitimating one, in local educational processes.

By definition then, educational transfer moves beyond purely local explanations. The attention given to overcoming methodological nationalism, and the associated call to introduce a "globalisation optique to the study of domestic educational reforms" (Steiner-Khamsi 2010, p.339) confirms this. We can argue then that this amounts to heightened attention to local side of the global-local dialectic, and its array of complexities. It is within this dialectic that the imperative comes to overcome methodological nationalism, even within national case studies (Steiner-Khamsi 2010, p.326). Vavrus and Bartlett's (2006, p.95) argument for a "vertical case-study approach" is a powerful example of this move, seeking to "situate local action and interpretation within a broader cultural, historical, and political investigation" and "promote full and thorough knowledge of multiple levels of comparison within a single vertically-bounded case". Steiner-Khamsi (2010, p.327) draws on this and Carney's (2009, p.327) work to argue "Precisely because globalization is ubiquitous, every case enables us to understand the transnational character of educational policies and practices. Any site, level of analysis, or actor within a given case(s) qualifies for comparison." This move to situate case study work within global contexts, and to account for influences beyond the boundaries of the nation-state when examining educational policy, reform, and practice, strengthens the general global-local trend.

Politics and Comparative Educational Research

Stephen Klees's (2008a) recent presidential address to the United States based Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) drew attention to the inherent political character of comparative research. In the address Klees (2008a, p.303) argued for the application of multiple theoretical and inter-disciplinary approaches to comparative educational issues, with an explicit focus the connections between "the central dilemma of our time (what to do about poverty, inequality, and development) and for our field (What is education's role in all this?)". He concluded by affirming:

> …there is nothing neutral about anything we do. Every paper, every project, every talk, and every class (if you are a teacher) is embroiled in these controversies. In the interests of progress, it should be incumbent on all of us—no matter what your position—to recognize, acknowledge, and engage these debates. (Klees 2008a, p.324)

This acknowledgement of the political nature of our research, and argument to make this explicit, is not new, with many historical examples of politically engaged comparative research centred on this premise (for just a few examples see Arnove & Dewees 1991; Arnove, Franz, Mollis & Torres 2003; Carnoy 1990; Ginsburg & Gorostiaga 2001; Griffiths 2010; Torres 1994). Moreover, this type of politically engaged work has tended to be identified with particular theoretical currents within comparative education and the social sciences more broadly, especially with Marxist or neo-Marxist positions (for an overview see Epstein 1983). In recent decades, following the collapse of historical socialism, this sort of political position has often been manifest within critiques of neoliberalism as a key feature of contemporary globalization, and the negative impacts of this dominant paradigm on the equitable provision of public education, at all levels, across the world (e.g. Klees 2008b, 2008c).

What scholars like Klees highlight within the comparative education field is the pressing need for politically engaged research in contemporary times, characterized by the persistence and exacerbation of social inequalities, and inequities within and between nations over recent decades. This is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the Education For All (EFA) initiative, and associated Millennium Development Goals, which could be readily achieved with the political will to redistribute the required resources (see Klees 2008a, pp.321-22). Others have similarly argued for comparative research that more overtly contributes to the task of understanding social reality, education's role in this reality, the imagining of desirable social futures, and educational action to help realize these. Arnove (2001, pp.500-501) for example called for research that will impact on "on public education concerning the nature of the world we live in", and for students' global awareness and understanding of "the global forces that impinge on our daily lives" as a matter of principle. In another presidential address Biraimah (2003) drew on critical and liberatory education perspectives to advocate engaged comparative research that advances both the amelioration of inequities and injustice, and the transformation of society through educational action. A part of her argument here was the need to reconnect academic/theoretical with policy-making/practitioner research, something well set out by Ginsburg and Gorostiage (2001).

Advocacy for politically engaged comparative research, in contemporary contexts, may open to charges of being out-dated, something associated with earlier decades when socialist and national liberation movements were taking State power and seeking to direct education to the task of transforming society (for a classic example of this earlier work see Carnoy & Samoff 1990). Conventional, chronological accounts of the development of theory and associated research methodologies encourage such a view, positioning neo-

Marxist critiques of modernization theory, for example, as having played their role and since been surpassed (for an example advocating postmodern perspectives see Rust 1991). The counter arguments are multiple – that no research is politically neutral, that critical issues of inequality and injustice require politically engaged responses/interventions, and that capitalism as a world-system continues to evolve, attract necessary critique, and provoke political action. Wallerstein's world-systems analysis centres on an imperative for engaged research, within the context of the existing world-systems transition toward an uncertain future, and so it is to this approach that I now turn.

World-Systems Analysis and Comparative Education

The review above seeks in part to illustrate the extent to which the move beyond the bounds of the nation-state, whether focused on cultural, economic or political phenomena, has been incorporated into comparative educational research. This is also evident in the EFA agenda, and accompanying work documenting the development of this global process at the levels of discourse (e.g. Chabbott 2003), or at the level of competing agendas amongst participating international organisations (King 2007), addressing the ways in the phenomenon of mass education for all is disseminated globally. Indicative of this context, researchers like Jones (2007, p.325) cite a "global architecture of education" that drives the diffusion or transfer of educational structures and ideas across diverse nation-states. Baker and LeTendre (2005, p.9) argue "the basic image of a school – what it is and what it should do – is commonly defined in the same way globally", while stressing that world culture from which this emerges is necessarily dynamic as local, regional and national contexts and influences impact on this process.

Prior to the rise of globalisation frameworks, world-level approaches in comparative research were most readily associated with the neo-institutionalist school that has sought to empirically demonstrate educational convergence globally. Identified convergence here is explained in terms of the development of world culture of education spread through nation-states participation in international organisations (e.g. Boli & Thomas 1997, 1999), and more fundamentally through shared conceptions and constructions of institutions as part of the modern-nation-state (Ramirez 1987; Ramirez & Boli 1987; Ramirez & Rubinson 1979). Mass school education, from this perspective, is a component of modern nation-state forms and institutions that reflect and inform shared global cultural assumptions about such institutions. This includes a core function of mass schooling to create members of the modern nation-state including a core function of creating members of the modern state (see for example Ramirez & Rubinson 1979). Since the mid-1970s, however, Wallerstein has been elaborating world-systems analysis from a more politically engaged, historical perspective, with timely implications for comparative research.

Wallerstein's world-systems analysis

Wallerstein's world-systems analysis centres on the historical development of the capitalist world-economy, with a single division of labour across multiple states or polities interacting via an inter-state system. Emerging as an historical world-system over the 16th and 17th centuries, the capitalist world-economy has overtime incorporated the whole world geographically, with a division of core, peripheral and semi-peripheral zones and associated economic activities that maintain inequalities within the system economic activity (Wallerstein 1983). As more and more parts of the globe were included within the capitalist world-economy, driven primarily by the search for cheaper labour to offset falling profits, Wallerstein (1992, 1995) argues that a dominant ideology or "geoculture" of liberalism developed which directly supported the capitalist world-system. This perspective looks historically to the French Revolution and the emergence of three competing ideologies of conservatism, liberalism and socialism, arguing that the shared geoculture or ideology of liberalism across the capitalist world-system was a merger of these, such that the multiple polities of capitalist and socialist/communist states held much common ground. The common ground included a belief in the universal validity of scientific knowledge and technological advances, and their capacity to underpin linear and seemingly endless economic development and progress, if directed by rational policy makers within strong and sovereign nation-state structures. As enunciated by Wallerstein (1995, p.163):

> The possibility of the (economic) development of all countries came to be a universal faith, shared alike by conservatives, liberals, and Marxists. The formulas each put forward to achieve such development were fiercely debated, but the possibility itself was not. In this sense, the concept of development became a basic element of the geocultural underpinning of the world-system.

Wallerstein further argues that the dominant geoculture of the capitalist world-system meant that the anti-systemic socialist movements of the 19th and 20th centuries came to share key features of the national development project and promise, and participate in the so-called 'two-step strategy' of achieving state power to reform the world (see for example Wallerstein 2002, 2010). Here then distinctions between and debate about the path to achieve state power, via revolutionary insurrection or electoral politics, diminish in light of the shared premise that once in power legislation could and would be enacted to achieve the legitimising goals of linear progress, development, increased consumption and material abundance for all; the utopian vision of a brighter future over the horizon (for a concise summary see Wallerstein 1998, 2002).

A defining feature of Wallerstein's world-systems analysis is the argument that the capitalist world-system is currently in a period of transition towards an uncertain alternative system, as a consequence of a number of empirically demonstrable crises confronting capitalism's imperative to maximise the accumulation of capital. Three of these irresolvable tensions are: (1) capital

seeking higher profits through increased prices and reduced labour costs, and the need for increased wages to sustain and expand demand; (2) capital seeking both lower tax costs to increase profits and increased State expenditures to support and effectively subsidise production costs, and to meet the externalised environmental costs of production; and (3) the structural and geographical limits on the relocation of capital to reduce costs (see for example Wallerstein 1992, 1995, 1998). The argument is that these secular trends are reaching their structural limits alongside the collapsing legitimacy of liberalism as the dominant geoculture of the world-system, which contrary to conventional thinking was marked by the collapse of historical communism and with it popular faith in the capacity of nation-states everywhere to meet their historic promise (Wallerstein 1998). The idea of the sovereign nation-state delivering national development and progress has been a key component of the capitalist world-system, further contributing to the period of crisis and transition.

Comparative research: Analysis and critique of the structures of knowledge

Wallerstein's world-systems analysis is described in a number of ways that are indicative of its potential to re-engage comparative research with core political concerns of our times. One such description refers to it as a "knowledge movement" critiquing and seeking to overcome historical divisions of knowledge within the social sciences that are no longer useful for understanding contemporary reality (Wallerstein 2004b). This critique includes the detailed analysis of the historical development of two competing cultures – nomothetic and idiographic epistemologies associated with science and the humanities respectively – and the dominance of scientific universalism as a defining feature of the world-system and its educational systems (Wallerstein 1996, 2004a, 2006). While substantial work is devoted to understanding the trajectory of the social sciences within the university sector, split into specific disciplines associated with these competing epistemologies, Wallerstein's underlying thesis is a consistent call to re-think, or un-think, these historical divisions (e.g. Wallerstein 1991). This is evident when he writes about "new epistemological centripetal tendencies" represented by the knowledge movements of cultural studies in the humanities and complexity studies in the natural sciences, as challenges to the dominant epistemological positions within their disciplines and contributions to an alternative approach described as the "social scientization of all knowledge" (Wallerstein 2006, pp.69-70).

The political nature of this critique is evident in the rationale for an epistemology that reunites the search for (scientific) truth with the search for the good or beauty, separated historically by the two cultures of science and philosophy. Torres (1998, p.443), for example, draws on this when making the case for the "quest for a just society" for example, citing as an implication of Wallerstein's theorising the idea that "the notion of the truth and goodness in society are intimately and inextricably intertwined". These ideas are central to debates about knowledge generally, and curricular knowledge specifically, and

the extent to which the study of knowledge disciplines is said to produce generalisable/universal or non-generalisable/particular knowledge. The world-systems call here moves beyond interdisciplinary approaches however, said to reinforce disciplinary boundaries, to advocate a unidisciplinary understanding of knowledge (e.g. Wallerstein 1999). This is described as an epistemology that incorporates both universalist long-term and particularist short-term analyses in a "constant dialectical exchange, which allows us to find new syntheses that are then of course instantly called into question" (Wallerstein 2006, p.49).

Sociological critiques of curricular content demonstrating the selective nature of what is included and excluded, the relative status accorded to selections, and the overt and hidden functions of these constructions are well established in the educational field (for a recent review revisiting these questions see Young 2008), and evident in comparative research (e.g. Chisholm 2005; Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist 2003). Wallerstein's (2006) world-systems analysis brings to this research a broader perspective in terms of the ways in conceptions of universal knowledge have been used by powerful states within the world-system to justify intervention under the familiar banners of modernising, establishing civilization, law and order, and more recently human rights. Additionally, the perspective elaborates the complex responses and demands of different 'minority' groups within societies in the face of an inevitably exclusionary (for some) universalism (see Wallerstein 2003b).

This work offers comparative research a politicised conception of all knowledge, but one firmly linked to the historical development and justification of inequalities under the capitalist world-system, but also one that retains the scope for analyses of how these play out in national and local contexts. For example, Wallerstein (2003) documents some of the common "particularisms" in response to the socioeconomic hierarchies and inequalities and the universal conceptions of knowledge and society that accompany them. These include minority groups who may "appeal to the universalistic criteria of the winners, demanding equal rights", only to discover that the meritocratic criteria are applied in a way that they lose anyway (Wallerstein 2003, p.136). Later they may seek to assert their own particularist history and identity as having been more advanced than that of the majority when assessed against the universalistic criteria, but for historical reasons they were held back; or alternatively they may point to the particular nature of the dominant universal criteria as a tool for arguing the superiority of their own. The process here is one of catching up to, and surpassing, the dominant group. Other common particularisms relate to "the declining middles" who see their status as falling and frequently attribute blame to groups in weaker positions, and of course those of the persistently most marginalised groups, usually indigenous populations. Actions to reassert their identity is presented as political mobilisation to achieve social, economic and political rights that are supposedly universal, but have failed to reach the groups in question (Wallerstein 2003, p.138). Here the very universalism to which the groups may appeal continues to

be used against them by opposing specific interventions or affirmative action as contrary to the universal, meritocratic principles said to be at play.

Running through this analysis is the political imperative to connect these cultural conflicts, and from a comparative education perspective the associated curricular debates, is the political imperative to the historical development of the capitalist world-system, its historical development and contemporary transition in turn informing our understandings of contemporary events. In particular, we are encouraged to approach this complexity from the position of the current transition of the world-system toward an uncertain future, so as to better inform our actions and choices. It is a call to reject what Wallerstein (2004a, p.147) argues are the "false debates" over the "antinomies between universalism and particularlism" that cannot be resolved without unthinking this antinomy and our dominant understandings of knowledge. In the direct examination of 'utopistic' possibilities, he writes:

> What is needed educationally is not to learn that we are 'citizens of the world' but that we occupy particular niches in an unequal world, and that being disinterested and global on the one hand and defending one's narrow interests on the other are not opposites but positions combined in complicated ways. Some combinations are desirable, others not. Some are desirable here but not there, now but not then. Once we have learned this, we can begin to cope intellectually with our social reality. (Wallerstein 1998, p.63)

Comparative research: The historical perspective of world-systems analysis

Another description of world-systems analysis labels the approach as "historical social science" (e.g. Wallerstein 2000). This project is described as being distinct from social science history or indeed sociological history, as sub-disciplines of history, in favour of analyses of "the entire history" of the system (Wallerstein 1999, p.195). Drawing on Fernand Braudel's conception of the *longue durée*, world-systems analysis here requires us to look not just to the world-system as the primary unit of analysis, but also to its long historical development within which the events of our analyses are situated. This historicity is essential to the analyses of the construction of knowledge, and shared geoculture of the world-system, shaping as a consequence the ways in which contemporary educational events, initiatives, policies, structures and practices are understood, and hence shaping our political responses.

Attention to the history of the world-system, "seeing all parts of the world-system as parts of a "world," the parts being impossible to understand or analyze separately" (Wallerstein 1999, p.195), is crucial part of the world-systems critique of globalisation theorising. Despite some efforts to situate world-systems analysis as a variant of globalisation theory (e.g. Sklair 1999), Wallerstein has directly questioned the very concept of globalisation, labelling it at one point a "gigantic misreading of current reality" (Wallerstein 2003a, p.43), and at another as "meaningless as an analytic concept" (Wallerstein 2000,

p.28). These judgements are made in favour of analyses of longer-term historical cycles and structural trends. This historicisation of our analysis, seeking to "place the reality which we are immediately studying within the larger context: the historical structure within which it fits and operates" (Wallerstein 2006, p.82), thus extends to any identified exceptional features of globalisation.

The call for historicity has been taken up in the comparative field by Clayton (2004), identifying the absence of this within much globalisation theorising as a major shortcoming of this line of research, and so advocating its inclusion via world-systems analysis as a positive response. To take the example of research attention on equity and meritocracy within education systems, for example, a world-systems perspective would take as its starting point the historical development and functions of scientific universalism across the world-system, and how the constructions and status of knowledge and subject disciplines have operated to support and legitimate inequalities within and between nation-states. Additionally, it directs our attention to the project of reconstructing dominant understandings of knowledge, and its teaching within education systems, as a necessary part of our analysis and intervention in the current period of transition.

The analytical, moral and political task of world-systems comparative researchers

The analysis of the capitalist world-system, and its transition into something else, contains within it debate about the type of world-system we would like to have. The world-systems research enterprise makes this task explicit, advancing a normative position to construct a substantively more equal, just and democratic alternative. This political project is central to, indeed a defining feature of, Wallerstein's work. He describes the need for intellectual activity to engage with three inter-related tasks: the analytical task of understanding social reality (the search for the truth); the moral task of imagining and describing how things could and ought to be (the search for the good and beautiful); and the political task of bringing these together to impact on social reality in practice. Wallerstein (2006, p.81) stresses that while these three tasks are different, and cannot simply be merged, nor can they be separated, hence the related struggle to create an alternative epistemology for our times that can unify knowledge.

The crucial point here is the argument that these inseparable tasks ought to be taken up by intellectuals engaged in academic research, abandoning once and for all any claimed sense of political neutrality in our work. Premised on the assumption that the world-system is in period of systemic transition, with the outcome one of deep uncertainty, engaging with the analytic, moral and political tasks is an imperative for comparative researchers examining educational phenomena across the world. In the case of comparative educational research, and the focus as Klees (2008a) put it the role of education

in all of this, substantial work and space arguably exists for this sort of politically engaged activity. In an extended essay discussing the tasks of contemporary anti-systemic social movements, Wallerstein (Wallerstein 2002, p.39) concludes, "We need to stop assuming what the better (not the perfect) society will be like. We need to discuss it, outline it, experiment with alternative structures to realize it". As comparative researchers we are well placed to take up this challenge, both through our analyses of education systems, our understanding of global and travelling educational reforms and how they are used in historically specific contexts, and our policy conclusions, recommendations and interventions to both impact directly on the transition in which we embroiled, and create education systems that might also centre on this sort of engaged intellectual activity.

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International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives, 2011, 10(1), 34-46.
ISSN 1443-1475 © 2011 *Shannon Research Press*. http://iejcomparative.org

Language proficiency and academic achievement in postgraduate business degrees

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An analysis of 2,253 graduates from an Australian university investigates the interaction between remedial English language programs and academic preparation programs and their effect on academic performance in postgraduate business degrees. The study found that students required to complete English language training prior to commencing a master's degree achieve significantly lower academic grades compared to students with English proficiency assessed as adequate for postgraduate study. In addition, the length of the remedial English program is found to be significantly negatively related to postgraduate academic performance. An analysis of the interaction between the two preparation programs, language and academic, shows that students required to take both a remedial English program and a preliminary academic program prior to postgraduate study have a higher level of academic performance than students required to take remedial English alone without a preliminary academic program. The study also analyses students' country of origin in order to enhance the understanding of the relationship between English language skills and academic achievement. Implications for practice and research are discussed.

[Keywords: International students, postgraduate education, English proficiency, academic performance]

Introduction

Since the mid-1990s, many universities in the western world have enrolled large numbers of international students in business degree programs. The admission of international students to postgraduate study raises issues concerning proficiency in the language of instruction. Admission to degree programs is available to those applicants who meet eligibility criteria. Each university has

its own eligibility criteria and this always includes proficiency in the language of instruction. Universities in Australia, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom, for example, have adopted a variety of language proficiency benchmarks. The most common in Australia is attaining a satisfactory score on an English language test, such as IELTS or TOEFL. Applicants who do not meet language proficiency benchmarks are generally offered placement in an English language course with an institution affiliated with, or accredited by, the university so that satisfactory completion of the English program leads to direct admission into the degree program. Applicants who have completed a bachelor degree in a country where English is the official or dominant language (e.g. North America) are excluded from testing and their language proficiency is assumed.

It seems obvious that proficiency in the language of instruction is essential for successful completion of a degree program. However, Australian universities differ on the level of proficiency required for admission. Each university is able to set its own language proficiency benchmarks. While many Australian universities accept a score of 6.5 in the IELTS test as the minimum acceptable proficiency standard, several Australian universities accept applicants with an IELTS of 6.0[1] while others require an overall score of 6.5 but allow scores below 6.0 on one or more of the four IELTS bands[2]. Furthermore, some Australian universities give students from select foreign universities preferential status providing a direct entry pathway to their degree programs. For example, students from several universities in Thailand where bachelor degree instruction has been in English are exempt from IELTS or other proficiency tests for admission to postgraduate degree programs at some Australian universities[3], while other Australian universities require all graduates from Thai universities to undertake an IELTS test prior to admission[4].

There is no doubt that market forces are at play in the admission of international students. Some universities seem willing to reduce language proficiency requirements in the expectation of achieving a greater market share. However, there is doubt whether lower language proficiency standards are in the interest of students or the university. In many ways, lower proficiency standards have negative effects. Staff find it hard to teach classes where students struggle with English and this can lower classroom morale. Students with English proficiency feel the quality of their educational experience is compromised when language and communication difficulties prevail in the classroom and in student-to-student interaction, such as occurs in group assignment work. Long-term, a university's reputation can be negatively affected and its brand damaged when students are unsatisfied with their educational experience. Within the general

[1] For example, Central Queensland University, Swinburne University, Southern Cross University and University of Tasmania.

[2] For example, Australian Catholic University.

[3] For example, University of Adelaide and University of New South Wales.

[4] For example, Macquarie University.

community and amongst employers, there has been criticism of the language skills of graduates from Australian universities suggesting that admission criteria on language proficiency are set too low.

This paper examines the relationship between English language proficiency and academic achievement in the context of an Australian university that has over 80 per cent international student enrolment in its postgraduate business programs. The analysis in this paper is an extension of earlier work by Eddey and Baumann (2009) that showed a significant statistical association between language proficiency and academic performance. Following on from this research, a deeper analysis of the association between academic performance and language proficiency was conducted and is reported here, focussing particularly on the length of language preparation, the interaction with an academic preparation program and students' country of origin.

An extensive body of research literature exists that examines the determinants of academic performance in education institutions such as schools and universities. The literature is in three streams. First, there are studies which empirically examine the predictive ability of entrance tests, such as the ability of a GMAT score to predict performance in an MBA program (e.g., Elkin, 1990). A second stream of literature comes from psychology and examines the effect personality characteristics have on academic performance, such as goal orientation and self-regulatory processes (e.g., Bouffard, Boisvert, Vezeau & Larouche, 1995). A third research stream examines the effect on academic performance of demographic attributes, such as age and gender (e.g. Sadler-Smith, 1996). The present study is most closely aligned with the demographic group of studies as variables of interest here include language proficiency, world region of origin and academic preparation as possible predictors of academic performance.

Sample

The sample of students used in this study consists of all 2,253 graduates from the Master of Commerce (MCom) and Master of International Business (MIB) programs[5] at an Australian university (hereafter referred to as "the University") for the period 2004 to 2007. Using the University's student system (with full permission of the University) the exit GPA from the MCom and MIB programs was recorded for each graduating student. Descriptive statistics for the sample are shown in Table 1.

[5] The postgraduate business programs are in the disciplinary areas of accounting, finance, business (generally), international business, marketing, information systems and technology. The programs include single degrees and combined degrees (e.g. international business combined with international relations).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics - ANOVA test on mean GPAs

	N	Mean	Med	Min	Max	Std dev	F stat	*p*
							0.998	0.393
2004 graduates	543	2.83	2.88	1.33	4.00	0.595		
2005 graduates	506	2.88	2.88	1.00	4.00	0.604		
2006 graduates	548	2.88	2.88	1.40	4.00	0.607		
2007 graduates	656	2.83	2.75	1.27	4.00	0.605		
2004 - 2007 combined	2253	2.85	2.88	1.00	4.00	0.603		

The mean GPA for the total sample of 2,253 graduates from the three year period 2004-07 was 2.85[6]. An ANOVA test on the mean GPAs for each of those three years shows that there are no significant differences in the exit GPAs between the graduating groups (p=0.393). This suggests the academic quality of the student group remained constant over the three year period.

English proficiency and GPA

For the next stage of the analysis, the sample was split into those students who met the University's test of English proficiency at the time of initial enrolment in a postgraduate degree and those who had completed a remedial English language program prior to enrolment. In this study, there is clear evidence that students required to take a remedial English language program achieve an academic standard below those that had met language proficiency levels at the time of enrolment (consistent with Eddey & Baumann, 2009). This result is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. English Proficiency - Tests for Difference in Mean GPAs

	N	Mean	Med	Min	Max	Std	t	*p*
2004-2007							10.778	<0.001
English proficient	1691	2.93	3.00	1.00	4.00	0.608		
English required	562	2.62	2.63	1.274	3.88	0.524		
Total	2253							

For the 2004-07 sample of 2,253 graduates, the mean GPA of English proficient students is significantly greater than those students who completed a remedial English language program (p<0.001). This result also applies to each of the four yearly graduate groups taken separately.

[6] The GPA at the University is based on a four-point scale where the weights for grades achieved in a subject are as follows: Fail = 0, Pass Conceded = 1, Pass = 2, Credit = 3, Distinction and High Distinction = 4. The GPA is then the average of the individual subject weights. Students complete eight subjects for a single postgraduate degree or 12 subjects for a double degree. The maximum GPA of a graduating student is 4.00. The minimum GPA for a graduating student can be below 1.00 but in practice it is never that low as students with a record of persistent failure either remove themselves or have their candidature terminated.

In an ideal world, we would expect that students in a postgraduate degree who were required to take a remedial English program would exit the English program with language proficiency that enabled the students to achieve an academic standard commensurate with their peers whose language skills were deemed sufficient at initial enrolment. That is, from postgraduate commencement, students would compete on academic ability alone. However, in the sample used in this study the results show that students who do not meet admission standards for language proficiency and complete a remedial pre-course English program remain at a disadvantage in their postgraduate business program.

Length of English program

If a student accepted into a postgraduate degree does not meet the English proficiency requirement prior to course enrolment, the University will offer a place in an English program conducted by an affiliated or accredited language provider. Successful completion of the English program, as certified by the provider, is all that is required to proceed to enrolment in the postgraduate degree. There is no post-English program testing of proficiency, such as retaking an IELTS test.

Each student who has not met proficiency levels and accepts the offer of a place with an affiliated or accredited language provider is placed in a program of a duration determined by the University. The English language programs are normally from 5 to 30 weeks. The general rule used by the University is that ten weeks of remedial English is required for each 0.5 below 6.5 on the IELTS scale. Again, in an ideal world, we would expect to find that students are assigned to the correct English language program and the proficiency of each student is brought up to the accepted minimum proficiency level. In other words, a student who had completed 10 weeks of English (because their initial IELTS score was 6.0) would be expected to have achieved the same level of proficiency as a student who had completed 30 weeks of English (because their initial IELTS score was 5.0)[7]. Therefore, students who had English programs of different lengths would be competing for grades in the postgraduate program on academic ability alone and not be advantaged (or disadvantaged) by superior (or weaker) English skills. This suggests that we would not expect to find any significant association between the number of weeks of English required of each student and the GPA achieved in their postgraduate degree.

Table 3 reports results of a regression analysis with GPA as the dependent variable and weeks of remedial English as the independent variable for those 562 students from the 2004-07 period who were required to complete a remedial English program.

[7] A 10 week program is required for an IELTS 6.0 because it is 0.5 points below the 6.5 entry standard. A 30 week program is required for an IELTS of 5.0 because that is 1.5 points below the 6.5 entry standard. Each IELTS deficiency of 0.5 points requires 10 weeks of remedial English.

Table 3. Relationship Between GPA and Weeks of English: Ordinary Least Squares Regression

	Unstandardised Coeff (B)	t	*p*	Adjusted R square	N
2004-2007 combined	-0.013	3.499	0.001	0.020	562

The regression analysis for the 2004-07 graduate group shows that the length of the remedial English program is significantly negatively associated with GPA (p=0.001). That is, those students who take longer English language programs prior to enrolment in their postgraduate business program achieve significantly lower GPA scores. The regression model explains 2 per cent of the variation in GPA for the aggregate 2004-07 sample of 562 students, which is reasonable explanatory power given this is a bivariate test and there are many other influences on academic performance. On a year-by-year basis, we find that the length of the English program is a significant explanator of GPA in 2005 (p=0.005) and 2006 (p=0.063, significant at the 10% level) but not a significant explanator in 2004 (p=0.194) or 2007 (p=0.255).

Students with the weakest English are placed by the University in the longest English programs. However, students in the longest programs have the lowest GPA outcomes, so the longer programs do not appear to improve English skills to the extent that students are able to commence their postgraduate programs on equal terms with those who initially had higher language proficiency levels. Furthermore, all graduates from the remedial English program, irrespective of the length of the program, under-perform academically relative to those with accepted English proficiency at the time of enrolment in the postgraduate degree. Consequently, some concerns exist about the adequacy of the remedial English programs and these are discussed in the conclusions section of this paper.

English proficiency and the preliminary academic program

For direct entry into the MCom or MIB program at the University, in addition to language proficiency, students are required to hold a first degree that includes successful completion of a range of business subjects suitable for the intended postgraduate course of study. For those without a background of business study, a preliminary program of academic study is available for some postgraduate programs[8]. The objective of the preliminary program is to bring academic knowledge and skills to a level such that students from a non-business background can successfully compete for grades with business students.

The preliminary program at the University has been outsourced to a private education provider that operates on the university campus. Students in the

[8] Not all the MCom degrees have a preliminary program pathway and for these programs students must be qualified for direct entry or they are not admitted to the postgraduate course of study.

preliminary program are academically and physically quarantined from students in the postgraduate business programs. Students must complete the entire preliminary program before enrolling in the postgraduate business program. Completion of the preliminary academic program leads to the award of Graduate Certificate

The remedial English program and the preliminary program of academic study are separate programs. Students without English proficiency and who have previously studied in a non-business area are able to take both the English program and the preliminary program. These separate programs are completed sequentially, English first to raise language proficiency and then the preliminary program to bridge the academic gap between a non-business first degree and the postgraduate business degree.

As students are assessed at application as to both English proficiency and academic background, the sample of 2,253 graduates from 2004-07 can be described in a 2 x 2 matrix as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Matrix of Proficiencies for 2004-07 sample of 2,253 graduates

	Business background	Non-business background *(Preliminary academic program completed)*
English proficient	1,413	278
English deficient *(Remedial English program completed)*	439	123

Of the 2,253 graduates, Figure 1 shows that 1,413 had been directly admitted to the postgraduate program, being both academically and language qualified at the point of admission. One hundred and twenty three graduates had been required to complete both the academic and language preparation programs. A further 439 graduates had been required to complete only a remedial English program and 278 graduates had been required to complete only the academic preparation program.

At the University, a student can spend up to 30 weeks completing a remedial English language program. That same student could spend another six months in a one-semester preliminary program of academic study. Therefore, it is possible for a student to spend nearly one year in preparation for a postgraduate business program, although for most it is much shorter. The cumulative learning and university experiences obtained in sequential language and academic programs suggest an interaction might exist between these levels of preparation which have a combined effect on academic performance in the postgraduate degree. The first stage of analysing a possible interaction is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Business Background and English Proficiency - ANOVA tests for Differences in Means

	N	Mean	Rank	Med	Min	Max	F stat	*p*
2004 students							4.248	0.039
Business Background								
English proficient	1413	2.95	1	3.00	1.27	4.00		
English required	439	2.60	4	2.63	1.27	3.88		
Preliminary Program								
English proficient	278	2.84	2	2.88	1.00	4.00		
English required	123	2.70	3	2.63	1.64	3.75		
Total	2253							

Table 4 shows that, for the 2,253 graduates from 2004-2007, students with the best academic performance are those who have a business background and are proficient in English at the time of initial enrolment. This group of 1,413 students from 2004-07 has a mean GPA of 2.95. The group with the lowest GPA are those who have a business background but required a remedial English language program prior to initial postgraduate enrolment. This group of 439 students has a mean GPA of 2.60. In between the highest and lowest groups of academic achievers are those who did not have a business background and were required to take the preliminary academic program. Of the 401 students who completed the preliminary program, those who were English proficient at the time of initial enrolment (278 students, GPA=2.84) achieved higher GPAs than those required to take a remedial English program (123 students, GPA=2.70). So, in both the business background group and the preliminary program group, those who were English proficient at the time of initial enrolment achieved higher GPAs in the postgraduate program than those required to undertake a remedial English program.

An ANOVA test on the mean GPAs of the 2,253 graduates from 2004-07 shows that the four mean values reported in Figure 1 are significantly different from each other (p=0.039). This significant difference in mean GPAs also holds for each of the four years analysed separately, supporting the finding for the overall sample.

It is relevant to observe the ranking of the four groups of students and notice that students with the lowest level of academic achievement in postgraduate business programs were those who had a business background but required a remedial English program. The ranking is consistent across the four years taken separately. This suggests that English proficiency rather than business background is the more important determinant of academic performance. If instead business background was the more important determinant, then those students with a business background (irrespective of English) would have consistently ranked higher than those who were required to take a preliminary academic program. However, we find that English proficient students, irrespective of their academic background, achieved a higher level of academic performance in the postgraduate programs, suggesting language skills are a

more important explanator of academic performance than prior academic studies.

English proficiency and country of origin

Over the 2004-07 period, within the University's postgraduate business programs, 83 per cent of the 2,253 graduates were international students and 17 per cent were Australian citizens or permanent residents. Within this sample of graduates, 63 countries are represented. Some international students come from countries where English is either the official or dominant language (such as North America), widely spoken (such as India) or well understood having been taught within the primary and secondary school system (such as Western Europe). These students typically have a high level of language proficiency prior to postgraduate enrolment. Other international students come from countries where English skills are not as strong and students generally have to study outside the school system to achieve proficiency levels sufficient for entry to a postgraduate program, or take remedial English training prior to postgraduate enrolment. This includes China, Thailand and Indonesia and language proficiency levels are typically lower for students from these countries. In other words English proficiency and country of origin are related variables.

To further study the relationship between country of origin, English proficiency and academic performance, the sample of 2,253 graduates from the period 2004-07 was divided into 24 countries plus four regional groups established to consolidate very small numbers of graduates from some countries. A country was required to have at least 10 graduates from 2004-07 to be separately recognised in this study, otherwise it was consolidated into a regional group. In this way, the 63 countries represented in the sample of 2,253 graduates are reduced to 28 for further analysis, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Country of Origin, English Proficiency and GPA

	English	N	Mean	Med	Min	Max	SD	t	*p*
Australia - local	proficient	91	3.25	3.27	2.00	4.00	0.54	-	-
	required	0							
Australia - migrant	proficient	290	2.97	2.99	1.63	4.00	0.57	0.906	0.366
	required	3	2.67	2.75	2.38	2.88			
China	proficient	355	2.74	2.76	1.00	3.88	0.54	3.442	0.001
	required	314	2.60	2.61	1.27	3.88	0.52		
Thailand	proficient	125	2.50	2.50	1.30	3.75	0.57	2.886	0.004
	required	69	2.74	2.73	1.56	3.75	0.54		
Indonesia	proficient	55	2.75	2.80	1.55	3.88	0.62	1.621	0.108
	required	53	2.56	2.46	1.50	3.88	0.61		
Hong Kong	proficient	37	2.83	2.80	1.60	4.00	0.64	0.169	0.867
	required	2	2.91	2.91	2.38	3.43	0.74		

Table 5. (continued)

	English	N	Mean	Med	Min	Max	SD	t	p
Malaysia	proficient	27	3.30	3.38	2.50	4.00	0.42	-	-
	required	0							
Singapore	proficient	11	3.44	3.49	2.75	4.00	0.44	-	-
	required	0							
Taiwan	proficient	41	2.32	2.30	1.44	3.63	0.54	2.363	0.021
	required	37	2.59	2.63	1.78	3.63	0.46		
Vietnam	proficient	27	3.08	3.05	1.60	4.00	0.59	2.110	0.043
	required	6	2.53	2.44	1.70	3.25	0.55		
Rest of Asia	proficient	21	2.74	2.68	1.73	4.00	0.54	1.833	0.079
	required	6	2.29	2.13	1.78	3.13	0.52		
France	proficient	79	3.00	3.07	1.75	4.00	0.50	0.885	0.378
	required	20	2.89	2.87	2.13	3.63	0.41		
Germany	proficient	165	3.51	3.60	1.40	4.00	0.04	-	-
	required	0							
Norway	proficient	55	3.08	3.03	2.06	4.00	0.47	-	-
	required	0							
Sweden	proficient	13	2.96	3.17	2.00	3.57	0.54	-	-
	required	0							
Netherlands	proficient	17	3.07	3.17	2.33	3.63	0.44	-	-
	required	0							
Western Europe	proficient	39	3.18	3.19	2.33	4.00	0.42	-	-
	required	1	3.71	3.71	3.71	3.71	-		
Eastern Europe	proficient	25	3.13	3.25	2.00	4.00		0.119	0.907
	required	2	3.08	3.08	2.86	3.29			
India	proficient	42	2.59	2.54	1.50	3.75	0.61	-	-
	required	0							
Indian region	proficient	13	2.70	2.83	2.00	3.63	0.57	-	
	required	0							
Turkey	proficient	18	2.65	2.66	1.33	4.00	0.75	1.011	0.320
	required	15	2.42	2.40	1.60	3.25	0.50		
Middle East	proficient	12	2.77	2.83	1.78	3.63	0.63	-	-
	required	0							
Africa	proficient	6	2.49	2.58	2.00	2.92	0.40	-	-
	required	0							
Brazil	proficient	17	2.58	2.43	1.78	3.86	0.57	0.619	0.543
	required	5	2.75	2.70	2.29	3.38	0.44		
Colombia	proficient	32	2.92	2.83	2.11	3.88	0.41	4.019	<0.001
	required	17	2.42	2.44	1.60	3.29	0.43		
Mexico	proficient	31	2.95	2.91	1.89	4.00	0.54	1.280	0.210
	required	3	2.55	2.55	2.38	2.63	0.14		
South America	proficient	20	3.05	3.06	1.88	3.88	0.53	0.789	0.437
	required	9	2.90	2.75	2.38	3.71	0.40		
North America	proficient	27	3.17	3.17	2.00	4.00	0.55	-	-
	required	0							

In Table 2, it was shown that, overall, there is a significant difference in the academic achievement between those students who applied to enter the postgraduate program proficient in English and those who did not. In Table 5, we see this pattern repeated on a country by country basis, however there are some anomalies. In relation to students from Thailand and Taiwan, the expected relationship between English proficiency and academic achievement is reversed. Thai and Taiwanese students who required English training prior to commencing their postgraduate degree program actually did better than those who entered the program proficient in English. This is against the trend. There are some possible explanations for this. First, in both Thailand and Taiwan, English language skills within the population are low, even for university graduates, as students are taught in their local language at school and at university. This could mean that most applicants for the University's postgraduate business program who are deemed proficient are only marginally so, that is, applicants are generally just at the IELTS 6.5 level and rarely higher. This is certainly the experience of both authors who have attended international education exhibitions in Thailand. If there is not a great deal of difference in the English proficiency of students accepted for entry and those who take remedial English language prior to entry, then we could not form an expectation about which group would have superior academic performance. Second, Thai and Taiwanese students, because of cultural differences, may benefit more than other international students from the acclimatising effect of taking English prior to admission to a postgraduate degree program, especially if the language course is taken on the University's campus through its own language centre, thereby allowing these students to become familiar with the University and its operations. This would not be the case if language instruction was taken through a third party language centre removed from the University campus and where the quality of teaching is beyond the university's control (unfortunately, data to test the impact of alternate providers of language training is not available from the university student system used in this study). Hong Kong, the rest of Western Europe and Brazil show results that also against the trend with students required to take English language training prior to postgraduate entry having achieved higher GPAs, although the sample sizes are small and the results are less powerful. The variability of results across countries suggests that cultural influences may be an intervening variable in the explanation of academic performance. The impact of culture on academic achievement deserves to be the subject of further study.

Table 5 also shows that a high proportion of English proficient students admitted to the degree programs come from countries where English is not the primary language, in particular India and Mexico. In India, only 10-15 per cent of the population have English as their primary language, although lower levels of English proficiency are widespread. Yet students from India admitted by the University to degree programs were all English proficient at application date. Clearly the University is recruiting from a particular stratum within Indian society, being tertiary educated students who have studied in English from

school through to completion of a bachelor degree. Mexico is similar as 91 per cent of students admitted by the University were English proficient, yet less that 5 per cent of the Mexican population speaks English as a primary language[9]. Western European countries (i.e. Germany, Sweden, Netherlands), except France, also provide almost exclusively English proficient students. Students from Germany, overall, are the best performing academically across the postgraduate programs, having an average GPA of 3.51.

Conclusion

An ability to profile successful students in postgraduate business programs is highly relevant to marketing and recruitment policy in any university for several reasons. First, with limited resources for marketing and recruitment, funds are best targeted to markets that produce the best students, so understanding the factors that are related to academic achievement is highly relevant to university managers. Second, in terms of student relations, universities are better able to communicate with applicants about factors related to GPA performance if a success profile can be developed, and this enhances student satisfaction.

It was found in this study that a student's English ability is an important factor in determining academic performance at the postgraduate level. Students who require a remedial English program prior to commencing postgraduate study generally achieve lower academic grades than those students who are evaluated as English proficient, except students from Thailand and Taiwan where the opposite applies. Furthermore, those students who complete longer remedial English programs surprisingly achieve lower postgraduate grades than those who complete shorter English programs. This raises questions about the effectiveness of remedial English language programs. Are longer programs preparing intending postgraduate students adequately? Or is the process by which students are assigned to English language programs of different length inappropriate? This study provides grounds to further investigate English language programs, such as an analysis discriminating between language providers, for example comparing university owned providers to private providers. Results may differ across language providers.

This study also showed that there is an interaction between English and academic preparation prior to undertaking postgraduate business studies. In each of the years from 2004 to 2007 it was found that the best performing students are those who had previously completed business studies and were deemed English proficient. The second strongest was that group of students who required the business preparation program and was deemed English proficient. The third group was that which needed the business preparation program and also needed English training. The fourth group was that which had already completed some business studies, and therefore did not require the preliminary program, but needed to do English language training first. This

[9] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_English-speaking_population.

suggests that it is English language proficiency, rather than academic background, that impacts academic performance in postgraduate study, as those with language proficiency, with or without prior business studies, achieved better GPA outcomes than those without language proficiency. These findings question the classic view that having an academic background which matches the intending area of postgraduate study is a prerequisite for academic success. We suggest that proficiency in the language of instruction is more important. Academic preparation can be remedied through preparatory study. Language deficiency seems much harder to fix.

Another interpretation of the data is that those students who required a remedial English program are more likely to achieve higher academic grades in the postgraduate program if they also complete a preliminary academic program prior to postgraduate enrolment. The exposure to preparatory academic study in an English speaking environment prior to commencement of the postgraduate business program acts to increase the likelihood of improved academic performance. However, those who complete the preliminary program of academic study do not exceed the academic performance of the most successful students in the MCom and MIB programs, being those with both language proficiency and prior business studies.

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International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives, 2011, 10(1), 47-60.
ISSN 1443-1475 © 2011 *Shannon Research Press*. http://iejcomparative.org

Transnational graduate education in China: Reflections from a longitudinal study

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Australian universities are increasingly engaged in transnational education, which is the off-shore provision of higher education. Providing courses entirely off-shore is a challenge to both students and instructors. This paper reflects on seven years of experience providing a MEd TESOL (Master of Education in Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages) in China. Reflecting on practice is becoming recognised as a valid approach to research as it is can accommodate the unpredictability of classroom teaching. In this programme, issues were identified, solutions implemented and then evaluated in a cyclical manner. Three main challenges were identified relating to teaching and learning on this programme: intercultural awareness, assignment writing and maintaining student engagement. After trialling possible solutions to these challenges, a unit for credit was provided focussing on academic writing and academic expectations. This unit is informed by theorising in academic literacies and the socio-cultural perspective on academic writing. The unit was supported by a web interface and students kept reflective dialogic journals for 10 weeks after the face-to face delivery of the unit. Through the unit of study and the web support problems with academic assignments such as plagiarism and the need for resubmission were.

[Keywords: transnational education, Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages, academic literacies, higher education, academic adjustment]

Introduction

China has been undergoing educational reform since the mid 1990s. In 2010 onwards it is estimated that an estimated 4 per cent of GDP is to be invested in education (Ministry of Education, China). To facilitate the upgrading of education China often looks the west to provide educational programmes. This is likely to increase in the coming years. This paper provides valuable lessons to those engaged in the provision of such programmes. It does this through a longitudinal reflective classroom study conducted over a seven year period.

Transnational tertiary education provides courses for students not based in the providing university's country. A student in China, for example, can study for a degree from an overseas university, usually in an English speaking country, without having to reside in that country. The demand for this type of program is on the increase with all of Australia's 38 public universities offering offshore programs (National Tertiary Education Union 2004). However, delivering education in this way has its own issues. In particular, there is a mismatch of expectations of academic study between the students and their instructors on such programs. The area is fraught with controversy concerning the extent to which courses can be tailored to the local context and needs of the students on the one hand, and at the same time, maintain the standardisation of a particular university degree program on the other. This paper describes teaching and learning challenges and solutions delivering a transnational Master of Education in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (MEd TESOL) program run by an Australian university in China. The program has been running for seven years and has had seven cohorts of students. The problems encountered in providing this programme are related to the cultural distance and understandings between the providing university and the host country.

Background

Transnational education is a relatively new idea. Its defining feature is that the university and students are located in different countries (UNESCO-CEPES 2000). There are a number of ways this can be done but today most transnational programs use blended delivery, combining face-to-face and distance modes of teaching. A program survey found that 40 per cent of Australian programs were classed as face-to-face and 54 per cent were classified as supported-distance. Only 1 per cent was classed as exclusively on-line (Davis, Olsen & Böhm 2000). A typical example would involve academics from the providing university teaching face-to-face intensively for short periods of time, followed up with instruction provided by local tutors. In recent years the availability of computers and the internet has greatly enhanced the provision of resources and course management.

With globalisation, there is a trend across education to internationalise. Universities deal with knowledge and are multi-disciplinary, and as such, are willing and eager to forge connections globally (Marginson & Van der Wende 2007). From China's perspective internationalisation started with Deng Xiaopeng in 1978 and is reflected in the country's education reform. Internationally the top three destinations for Chinese students are United States, United Kingdom and Australia. (Gu 2011). From Australia's point of internationalisation keeps universities competitive in the global arena and brings in revenue. In Australia it is expected that international student enrolments will continue to increase and that by 2025 global demand will exceed 996,000 students (Böhm, Davis, Meares & Pearce 2002). This growth is reflected in transnational programs. From a student's perspective, acquiring a

degree from an English speaking university is viewed as an investment for career development and provides status (Chapman & Pyvis 2006). Some students use offshore programs as a pathway to more advanced degrees with the providing institution. In China, the increasing demand for higher education has been met partly by allowing transnational programs (Huang 2008). Inherent in the delivery of transnational programs are the cultural issues that lead to a mutual understanding of academic standards, professional relationships, administration, budget and student services. (Eldridge 2005).

There is a great deal in the research literature about the adaptation of international students to university in western settings (see Jin & Cortazzi 2011). International students who enrol on on-shore programs are a heterogeneous group. They may come from different countries, speak different first languages, have different educational backgrounds and have different needs and expectations. The university is the common link and they learn from each other and communicate in English during their studies. For these students adaptation to the academic climate of the university, while not without problems, usually happens. However, there is much less research into the adaptation of off-shore students to an academic programme. These students, in contrast to on-shore students, are homogenous. They live in the same country, speak the language of that country -- which is different from the host institution, have similar educational backgrounds and often have similar needs and expectations. In this case it is questionable to what extent students need to adopt the academic culture of the providing institution.

Degree-providing universities need to ensure equity for all students and ensure standardisation of their degree programs. A master's degree delivered on-shore should be of equal worth to a master's degree delivered off-shore. There needs to be a balance between teaching practices, curriculum and assessment that maintains the standards of the providing university yet recognises the particular context of the host country.

The educational background of students on transnational programs will most likely be dissimilar to that of an Australian university. Ballard and Clanchy's (1997) research into international students at Australian universities indicated that Asian students are more accustomed to structured teaching situations and an emphasis on teacher control. In their taxonomy of teaching and learning situations, they refer to Asian students in the 'reproductive' category, where input and assessment comes from the teacher and excellence is achieved by reproducing knowledge. The teaching and learning situation in an Australian university on the other hand they categorise as 'analytical,' where the emphasis is on questioning knowledge and being critical, or, in the case of graduate research, 'speculative,' with an emphasis is on theorising and hypothesising (Ballard & Clanchy 1997).

There is mention in the literature on the need for intercultural competence in academics teaching on transnational courses (Leask 2008; Ziguras 2008). It is recommended that instructors have an understanding of the prevailing culture in

the host country and its influence on the expectations of the students in terms of teaching practices rather than placing the load on students to adjust to the culture of the providing university. So some form of intercultural training for teachers of transnational programs is needed.

The tension in the area of curriculum reflects the need to provide standardised courses that can accommodate local contexts. McBurnie refers to issues of hegemony, with courses presenting western perspectives as the norm. He contrasts this with the desire of students to receive a western education rather than a modified local version (McBurnie 2008). Ziguras makes the argument for standardised internationalised curricula that prepare all students, whether on-shore or off-shore, for engagement in a globalised world (Ziguras 2008).

The issues facing transnational programmes can be theorised through the notion of academic literacies. This is a pluralistic view of academic literacy which accepts that a desired literacy in a given area is determined by culture which is socially dependent (Lea & Street 1998; Lillis & Scott 2008). Academic literacy is not one-dimensional. Academic writing, which forms the basis of assessment for the major part of a graduate degree, depends in part on competence in language but this is greatly influenced by the audience, purpose and setting of the academic writing task. Thus a student who is deemed an expert in academic writing in one setting, for example a Chinese university, would not necessarily be deemed as such in another, for example an Australian university. For example, an instructor may be expecting evidence of critical reading in a student's assignment while the student may think copying sections from a textbook is an acceptable practice when writing assignments.

This paper focuses on is based on attempts to improve teaching and learning on a transnational MEd TESOL program provided by an Australian university in China. The program targets qualified Chinese teachers of English. The MEd TESOL started in 2003 and is now running its seventh cohort. In the tradition of action research, solutions to problems have been trialled and evaluated. The overarching problem facing instructors and students is primarily how to provide a balanced programme that satisfies the need of both the providing university and be relevant to the students' local context.

The programme

The international programme under discussion is a MEd TESOL provided by an Australian university. The programme comprises eight units of study focussing on particular areas of TESOL, such as Second Language Acquisition and Contemporary Developments in English Language Teaching. The course is taught and assessed entirely by instructors who are academics from the providing institution. The units are delivered and administered at a host university in China. Each unit is taught in intensive mode over six days. Two units are taught in two-week blocks. The blocks were negotiated to fall within university holidays when most of the students who are employed as English teachers, are on holiday. Thus the programme spans a calendar year, usually

beginning and ending in October. The students are provided with necessary course materials. With the early cohorts printed readers were compiled for the students. In more recent cohorts, students have electronic access to materials through the providing university's library. After the delivery of the units, students have assessment tasks (assignments) to complete, for example, a discursive essay or a review of the literature on a given topic. Usually the students submit their assignments within two or three months of the face-to-face teaching. Initially this was done in hard copy and more recently in electronic format.

This paper is based on the experiences and reports of seven cohorts of offshore MEd TESOL students and their instructors. The cohorts ranged in size from 55 to 8 students. The instructors were eight academics employed by the university and seven tutors connected to the university through employment and/or research.

Reflect, act, evaluate

A reflective perspective was used to refine and develop the programme over the seven cohorts. This can be identified as an action-research approach (Burns 2010). This approach mirrors the evolution of teaching programmes and the practices of reflective teachers. Typically this perspective involves identifying or observing a problem, planning and implementing a solution and then reflecting upon the outcomes. This is cyclical process as solutions and interventions are evaluated and refined. Burns stresses the need to identify problem situations rather than problem behaviours. This approach was chosen as the most naturalistic way to monitor and develop the teaching of the degree.

Data were collected from multiple sources. These included classroom sources, participant sources and task sources. The classroom sources comprised data from observations collected through field notes. The participant sources comprised data from student and instructor discussions and formal student evaluations done at the end of every unit of study. The task sources included academic assignments and instructor assignment feedback. These naturalistic data were collected over seven years. With such a large collection of data thematic analysis was chosen as the most appropriate analysis method. The data were collated and transformed into texts. These were coded according to emerging themes and sub-themes. From this analysis the main recurring problem identified was a cultural gap of teaching and learning expectations. This was further refined to identify three main issues that needed attention: intercultural awareness, writing, and student engagement. These are articulated below as challenges that needed to be overcome.

Challenge 1: Intercultural awareness

With the first cohort, academic instructors faced issues arising from a lack of understanding of the cultural context of the students. This was evident in three areas: the teacher/student relationship, the teaching approach and teaching

content. The academic instructors on the first cohort were surprised by the expectations of the students in terms of the relationship between them. Teachers have a very high status in China and are greatly respected. There is a saying in Chinese: '*yi ri wei shi, zhong shen wei*' (A teacher for a day is a father for life) that highlights this view of teachers. The students expected a much closer relationship with the teacher than the teachers were used to. The students expected more attention from the teachers, for example, some students reported that they were surprised when the teachers left the classroom during break times. They also expected the teachers to provide a lot more academic support.

The teaching approaches used on the MEd TESOL tended to reflect current theorising in communicative and task-based language learning (Hiep 2007). Students were encouraged to question and discuss issues in class. Given the perceived role of teachers in China and the predominance of reproductive teaching and learning, this was alien to the students.

The content of the units taught also needed to be modified in comparison to units taught on-shore. With the first two courses, academic teachers delivered intensive versions of their on-shore units and had the same expectations of the students' work and participation. In student feedback, the students demanded more relevance to their needs. They requested the course focus more on their teaching situations. Most of the first cohort was English teachers who taught large groups of university students. The focus of this teaching was exam driven and there was very little emphasis on speaking as this was not assessed in the College English Test.

Challenge 2: Understandings of academic assignments

With all the cohorts there have been issues related to academic assignments. These issues relate to administration and writing. The administration of assessment was greatly influenced by distance. In the first four cohorts, electronic submission was not possible and assignments were sent by post. This posed problems for submission deadlines and student feedback. In later cohorts, electronic submission became the norm. A web-based interface was introduced (web CT) three years ago but some students found this difficult to use. Issues with academic writing were related to understanding academic assignments, academic style and the use of resources.

Over the first six cohorts, students submitting off-topic assignments were a regular occurrence. The assignments set were usually writing tasks that required discussion of theoretical issues, referring to research in the area and applying this to practice. The reason for the off-topic assignments was sometimes due to the misinterpretation of the assignment task. However, in some cases it seemed that the root problem was one of effort and or /time management *'Your assignment could have been more informed by reading and theorising' (*instructor's comment on student assignment). With the first five cohorts, plagiarism was a frequent problem in the early assignments, ranging from large scale copying of text from sources, to as patchwriting (Pecorari 2003). Patch

writing refers to copying chunks from a number of published resources and patching them together in a written assignment. The references are usually provided but there is no indication of quotations nor is there evidence of the student's voice within the writing. Incidents of plagiarism and patch writing were usually limited to the initial assignments, indicating a misunderstanding of western academic writing expectations. A further issue was misinterpreting the requirements of the assignment, for example: '*The aim of this assignment was an analysis task. You should have analysed the text according to your understanding of pragmatics.'* (instructor's comment on student assignment). This was a common issue with all cohorts.

Challenge 3 Engagement and effort

A further issue was identified relating to engagement. It was evident from some of the data that an off-topic assignment was due to lack of effort rather than misinterpretation of the assignment task and assessment criteria. Almost all the students were emplyed English teachers. They were working full-time and studying. The usual length of a full-time MEd TESOL course onshore is nine months. The transnational groups had about 14 months to complete their programme including all assignments. Because the programme was delivered face-to-face in short bursts of two weeks, it was evident that some students only focussed on their academic work immediately before assignments were due. When there was a long gap between the teaching of the course and the due date of the assignments, a lack of depth was observed and in some cases a lack of effort '*this assignment reflects little reading and seemingly little effort'* (Instructor's comment on student assignment).

In the early cohorts the students reported that they felt isolated and that the resources at their disposal were limited. While they had some electronic access to the university's library this was lot more limited than today. Students often reported problems with internet access in China and the references they encountered in their sessions were very often not available in China. The early cohorts of students reported feeling frustrated because so little of the material was available electronically. The students felt they were at a great disadvantage in comparison to on-shore students who had much easier and wider access to materials. Over the seven years, more and more material has become available electronically but the problem of resources is still reported in student feedback.

In summary, this project identified two major areas where action was required:

1. Reducing the gap between academic and student expectations in terms of the MEd TESOL.
2. Facilitating and maintaining student engagement.

Solutions

This section addresses the action taken to address perceived problems of intercultural awareness, writing, engagement and effort over the seven year period. As stated above, this paper is not about a formal research project where

samples and data can be controlled and measured. In the vein of action-research, a problem was identified, and then an action applied which was then evaluated. If the problem was not solved, another action was trialled.

Intercultural awareness

The issues relating to intercultural awareness involved the instructor/student relationship, teaching approach and teaching content. The expectations on both sides for the instructor/student relationship differed and a compromise was reached with both students and academics modifying their expectations. This was not perceived as a problem by either academics or students. The relationship developed through natural negotiation until both students and instructors felt comfortable. From the instructor's viewpoint a much closer relationship in comparison to on-shore students was the result. The instructors gave extra time to talk to students during breaks and after class. After the teaching sessions the instructors engaged in e-mail interactions with the students. From the student's part they got used to working independently without recourse to personal interaction. Both instructors and students found the exchange personally enriching.

The teaching approach used on the transnational course was informed by collaborative learning and communicative and task-based language teaching pedagogy. This involved discussion, pair and group work and the completion of collaborative tasks. In the first instance the students were reluctant to speak out in a large group. Instructors did not pressure the students to do so. However, over time students became more outspoken. The class had a monitor. The monitor was picked by the host university as the class representative and dealt with communication and the needs of the students, the host institution, the academics and the providing university. The monitor enjoyed high status in the class and was often the most outspoken. In western contexts this type of set-up at a tertiary level does not occur. The academics got used to this arrangement and appreciated the benefits it brought in terms of communication both face-to-face and in distance communication.

A problem relating to intercultural awareness in terms of course content emerged with the first cohort and needed immediate attention. Even though the staff teaching on the transnational MEd TESOL were experienced academics and language teachers with overseas experience they found they knew little about the students teaching backgrounds. They found that the focus and content of their teaching was not perceived as applicable in a Chinese context. When teaching on-shore courses it is impossible to address all student needs as students come from diverse backgrounds, so, a more general approach is taken. On the transnational course the students expected the content to be made explicitly relevant to the Chinese context. The solution to this issue in the first instance was through discussion with the students in-situ. Then, upon return to Australia, academic staff had sessions together to analyse the cultural context of their teaching in China. These discussions included a Chinese expert in teaching

and learning. The academics teaching on the transnational MEd TESOL are a tightly knit group who meet frequently to discuss understandings of the teaching and learning. The composition of the group teaching on the transnational MEd has remained virtually the same over the seven cohorts. This has meant that the development of cultural expertise has been cumulative.

Based on the discussions and feedback, the content of the courses and the assignments were refined to address student needs more directly. For example, more tasks that included reflection on teaching practice were used.

Understandings of academic assignments

The administration of academic assignments posed problems over the seven cohorts. With the initial cohorts assignments were sent by mail. The marked assignments, with feedback, were returned to the students by the next visiting academic instructor. Whilst the shortcomings of this method were obvious in terms of timely completion of assignments and assignment feedback, there were no solutions available with earlier cohorts. Access to internet facilities or expertise was not available for all the students. The first action to solve this problem was to introduce electronic submission with the third cohort. Electronic marking is used on all units now but initially was not popular with the instructors because such marking is more time consuming than pen and paper marking. Assignments are submitted as e-mail attachments. These are then marked using track changes and returned electronically to the students. This is not common practice with on-shore units. Students hand in hard copies and get handwritten feedback. Assignments are collected face-to-face from the instructor.

The issues with academic writing were complex with an obvious gap in expectations between students and academics. In this area there was little room for compromise because of standardisation of requirements for Master's degrees across the university. On-shore students have the opportunity for support. They have access to learning support workshops and may elect to study a unit for credit focussing on academic writing. Off-shore students have little in the way of such support. They need to rely on direct communication with the instructor on the course. In recent years an interactive website targeting undergraduate writing is accessible to all university students. However, it is only very recently that students have been able to access this site consistently from computers in China. To address issues of academic writing, several interventions were trialled and evaluated. Whereas the group of academics remained constant, each year there was a new group of students facing similar problems with academic writing in English.

Three types of intervention were trialled to address issues connected with academic assignments: understanding academic assignments, academic style and the use of resources. In the first instance the explanation of academic requirements was left to the individual instructors. They usually devoted up to one session (approximately two hours) to explaining the assignments. Some

instructors elected to show students sample assignments, which were taken from previous students both on and off-shore. Exceptionally good assignments were not used as this would have presented unrealistic models. When using sample assignments it is important to use more than one as this may have a straightjacket effect on student's creativity and thinking. Typically the assignments were copied and distributed to groups of students for discussion in class. The students were not allowed to take the assignments out of class as this might influence their work and could be viewed as lowering rather than enhancing engagement.

The in-class preparation for assignments has now become an essential part of all units. The use of sample assignments is very popular with the students and is usually rated very highly on unit-of-study evaluations. The evaluations indicated that students would have preferred to have kept personal copies of the sample but this request was not granted for the reasons stated above. The use of in-class preparation for assignments was perceived as helpful but lecturers and students were still concerned that there was still insufficient understanding of academic requirements. The incidence of plagiarism and inappropriate use of sources and other writing issues were still evident in student assignments

After discussion with teaching staff the next action involved combining the individual approach to specific assignments with more general orientation sessions. Each academic retained their specific assignment preparation sessions and it was decided to provide orientation sessions at the beginning of the degree course. Two sessions were provided along with a session on using the library and electronic sources. The sessions comprised presentation, discussion and group tasks related to academic writing, tasks and expectations. Guidance was provided in areas such as plagiarism and the interpretation of assignment tasks.

The combination of these two methods was well received by students and instructors. However, the time was limited. Each academic unit was taught intensively over six days. This is a very heavy load for both students and instructors and did not leave much room for extra activities. The orientation sessions were conducted after class and each session lasted 90 minutes. By this time students were tired and had probably reached saturation point in terms of absorbing further information. Also, the sessions were conducted before the students had started to think about assignments so it was easy to forget the information presented and discussed. The orientation sessions did not seem to influence the level of engagement or the occurrence of plagiarism or off-topic assignments.

After discussion with academic staff it was decided to provide the students in the next cohort a unit-for-credit focussing in academic communication. In the on-shore MEd degree such a unit is available for students. The unit English in Academic Settings (EAS), focuses on the theory and practice of academic writing. It is informed theoretically by academic literacies, writing process and genre theory. Within this unit of study students were required to research their

own academic writing tasks. It was decided to redevelop this unit to apply to off-shore students. The unit outline is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Unit of study outline for the offshore academic writing course

Session	Theoretical perspective	Activities
• Defining academic writing. • Analysing academic expectations • Academic genres	• Overview of academic writing theory • Academic discourse communities • Academic literacies	• Diagnostic writing task (online) • Identifying academic discourse community • Comparison of academic genres
• Selecting and evaluating readings and sources	• Intertextuality	• Study skills • Library skills • Reading strategies
• Using sources in writing • Critical review	• Critical thinking • Critical perspective on academic writing	• Critiquing academic sources
• Plagiarism and referencing • Identifying plagiarism	• Cultural and critical perspectives on plagiarism	• Recognising plagiarism • Paraphrasing
• Interpreting assignments • Planning writing	• Process approach to writing	
• Cultural issues in writing • Organising writing	• Cultural practices in writing	
• Academic vocabulary • Academic style	• Academic Word list • Academic style	• Learning academic vocabulary • Characteristics of academic style
• Students as researchers	• Ethnography of writing	• Researching writing tasks
• Drafting and editing writing	• Grammar, vocabulary, cohesion, organisation, punctuation	
• Researching writing		• Interviewing academics • Conducting analysis

The major strength of the unit is that through an emphasis on the social and cultural nature of academic writing, students learn how to investigate the requirements and norms of academic writing in their own setting. This is informed by Johns (1997) notion of 'students as researchers.' The off-shore cohort of students analysed the general academic expectations of studying as a student at the providing university then moved on to research the specific expectation of a given unit of study. The students conducted an analysis of context (Paltridge & Starfield 2007). The context included audience, purpose, expectations and use of sources. The students did this in groups to share thinking. They analysed university documents and webpages that provided writing guidance, analysed assignment questions and assessment criteria, examined and analysed previous assignments and interviewed academic staff

and previous students (face-to-face and electronically). Using this information they produced individual research reports reflecting on the theory of academic communication and their analysis of the data they had collected. In this way the students learned about the influences of institutional requirements, expectations and norms within TESOL and sub-disciplines and those of individual academics. They learned how audience, purpose and expectations can greatly influence academic writing.

The students reported the course as being very useful;

> "the journey of this English in Academic Settings is a helpful and significant experience in my professional life. I will continue the journey in the future." (student comment in unit study evaluation)

> "for myself, the assignments of English in Academic Settings , the journals and the critical review all give me insight into what I have read and am reading." (student comment in unit study evaluation)

With this cohort there were no incidences of plagiarism, and only a few cases of resubmission over the next two units. However, it was quite challenging to conduct a unit of this nature over one week. On-shore students acquire knowledge of academic expectations over time through being part of the academic community. They also have easy access to face-to-face contact with lecturers and tutors. This access is not available to off-shore students.

Engagement and effort

The issues with engagement and effort were initially addressed together with writing. Engagement and effort were gauged though assignments. Evidence of engagement concerned the depth of understanding of issues presented in assignments. Effort concerned how much work students did to produce assignments, for example, the evidence of wide reading.

In the first place this was dealt with by the individual instructors teaching units. Subsequently this was addressed during the orientation session. However, students were simply informed of the requirements of full-time study. With on-shore students it is estimated that a six-credit-point course equals one quarter of a full-time load. The rule of thumb is that for an average student getting an average grade requires around nine hours of study per week. This figure includes contact time, assignment preparation and reading. This was valuable as students were quite surprised by the number of hours required. After reflection it was decided to include a focus on effort and engagement through the EAS unit. These issues were addressed and discussed directly with the students. To further facilitate effort and engagement a web interface was set up which offered support for 10 weeks after face-to-face delivery of the unit. The students were required to keep a weekly reflective journal for 10 weeks about their experiences learning and studying on the MEd TESOL. This was an assessable component (20%) of the unit. The assessment was based on the completion of task and evidence of reflection. In the journal entries students reflected their learning and on the process of writing assignments for EAS and one other unit.

The journals were dialogic and students and the EAS instructor were able to communicate weekly. The students also set up a peer network through the site. As well as helping the students maintain focus, the journal writing helped the students get used to writing.

The weekly journals and frequent communication though the site were well received by the students. While the journal writing was part of the assessment load many students could see the benefits of this type of reflective activity 'Keeping journals is becoming a habit in my study. This is the last journal to be submitted, but I think I would still keep in touch with you via e-mail or the website to learn more from you' (student journal entry).

Conclusion

Undoubtedly including a unit focussing on academic expectations and supporting this by longer term communication facilitated the students' learning experience and promoted engagement. The web journals were used for the unit of EAS as a 13-week trial. However, this needs to be balanced with the workload of the academic. The web interface required some internet expertise in setting up interactive web-pages. The training for this was readily available through the university but this required an investment of time. In addition to this, engaging in weekly communication with students could be quite time consuming.

The results on the first two units for the offshore programme were very encouraging with no resubmits and no plagiarism. The close web contact was not extended beyond the first two units because of timing and planning constraints. In subsequent units some assignment issues such of off-topic assignments and suspected plagiarism emerged. Prolonging communication with the teacher of EAS over the full study period of the degree will be the next action in this programme.

In conclusion, it is necessary to focus on cultural issues when teaching transnational courses so that students can apply their learning to their own contexts. It is unrealistic to expect off-shore students will acquire academic literacies easily if they are outside the academic discourse community. Facilitating this through a conscious focus on academic writing and through replicating the discourse community through using a web interface will help off-shore students adhere more closely to the academic demands of the providing university's degree program.

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International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives, 2011, 10(1), 61-79.
ISSN 1443-1475 © 2011 *Shannon Research Press*. http://iejcomparative.org

Education for All and cross-border provision of higher education in the Asia-Pacific

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Worldwide, the issue of supply and demand in higher education is becoming an ever-increasing concern of the new millennium. Since 1990, when the Education for All movement began, significant progress has been made towards achieving a quality basic education for all by 2015. While UNESCO may not necessarily reach this goal for all children, a considerable proportion, irrespective of background or nationality, will receive a basic education free of charge. Currently, emphasis is being placed on the quality and variety of instruction. However, little is being done about what to do with those students who ultimately complete their secondary education.

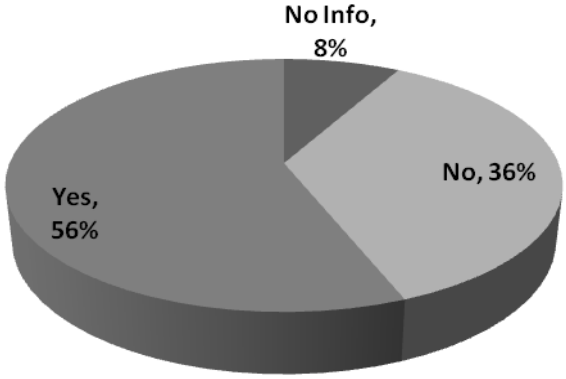
Using secondary data from UNESCO's Global Monitoring Reports (2005; 2008; 2010) and the United States Census Bureau International Data Base (IDB), this research attempts to analyse empirical estimates of data compiled specifically on the Asia-Pacific region and the projected estimates of school-aged populations from the present to 2015. While it is admittedly difficult to forecast what will occur in the future with these children—moreover identify variances in national education policies and standards-based reforms—this study aims to use these estimates to determine what appropriate mechanisms and/or interventions may be needed to meet anticipated growth in student demand in the region. As developments in cross-border initiatives impact the provision for tertiary education, a discussion of this subject follows the earlier analysis. It is noted that a careful cross-national comparative study may help inform future cross-border higher education models, particularly in those countries where already demand far outstrips supply.

[Keywords: Education for All, cross-border provision, higher education]

Introduction

Ever since the Delors Report of 1996, education has received a justifiable boost in playing a fundamental role in one's personal and social development. In the current global context 'education' is not only considered a fundamental right of every individual (Freire 1970), it is increasingly viewed as a 'universal whole' extending from early childhood, primary, secondary, to postsecondary and beyond. This is demonstrated by educational statistics and other evidence-based indicators collected by the OECD's *Education at a Glance*, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), and the UNESCO *Global Monitoring Reports*. These statistical data attempt to analyse the state of education internationally. Currently, however, 'fundamental right' does not always translate to a free education. According to UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report 2010, Figure 1 illustrates that presently, only 56 per cent of nation-states provide legal guarantees to a free education.

Figure 1. Distribution of legal guarantees to a free education worldwide (n=151 countries)



Source: UNESCO Global Monitoring Report (2010)

Legal guarantees are often misinterpreted by nation-states, and in many cases a *free* education may be interpreted or legitimised as a compulsory one. While lower and upper age limits of compulsory education may differ—ages six to 15 are found to be typical—the compulsory age range extends from as early as four in Turks and Caicos Islands to 21 in Chile (Global Monitoring Report 2010).

What kind of education is also a major challenge. Addressing the issue of quality is only one facet, as there is increasing debate about the benefits associated with basic education versus primary education, the variety of subjects taught, the type of pedagogical approaches used, and provision of higher education. "Basic education encompasses early childhood education, primary education, and basic life skills for youths and adults, including literacy" (OECD-DAC Secretariat in UNESCO Global Monitoring Report 2008, p.25). As a case in point, if one were to measure basic education instead of years of education, the research of Couloub et al. indicates that "...literacy scores, as a direct measure of human capital, perform better in growth regressions than

indicators of schooling" (Couloub et al. in OECD Education at a Glance 2006, p.155). In other words, counting those who have attained literacy as opposed to counting those who are actively participating in school is significant. It is believed that many countries are increasingly viewing educational literacy as a key driver of economic growth and thus refer to international comparisons in education to reflect not only a recognition of its importance but to compare its status among other like-minded countries or competitors. Particularly in countries where there is a stark contrast between the 'haves' and 'have nots', "...with youth unemployment rising, governments increasingly see skills development (including literacy) as a vital component of overall strategies to combat marginalization" (UNESCO Global Monitoring Report 2010, p.6). A metadata analysis concerning definitions of 'literacy' suggests, however, that many countries prefer to define their own specific context and that definitions may and can be refined over time. Due to these disparities and exceptions to the rule, educational literacy may be taught across *all* levels and there may be different age groups representing primary school participation.

Acknowledging that educational literacy is generally valued more, particularly in the developing world, there is still justification to analyse participatory rates in primary schools because of the role the political state plays in shaping social structures. As Carnoy and Samoff comment,

> The analysis of transition societies, to an even great extent than that of capitalist societies, must focus on the political process and the state and place less emphasis on economic relations...All transition strategies involve, in some sense, mass mobilization—and a crucial element in mobilizing masses in education. (Carnoy & Samoff 1990, pp.12-13)

This may provide rationale to investigate participatory rates in schooling, especially primary education, as it is generally assumed that the fundamentals of literacy are taught during these years. Universal primary education is "...assessed using the total primary net enrolment ratio (TNER), which takes into account children of primary school age enrolled in primary school" (Global Monitoring Report 2008, p.179). It reflects primary school enrolment (participation specifically), which helps to ascertain gender equity and access, but does not reflect actual learning, literacy, or quality of education.

The OECD's Organising Framework

In this research, the OECD's organising framework has been utilised to make estimates of school participatory rates at the primary school level, to compare and contrast surpluses and shortfalls in numbers in order to project implications for tertiary education, and to analyse the data for discussion and further research (See Figure 2).

Data on demographics and participatory rates of children at primary school levels are difficult to collect, collate, and calculate for projection purposes. Within the OECD framework, this research study uses knowledge banks from three main sources:

- UNESCO's Global Monitoring Reports (2005; 2008; 2010);
- OECD's Education at a Glance (2006; 2007); and
- United States Census: online.

Figure 2. OECD's Organising framework for analysing educational indicators

	1. Education and learning outputs and outcomes	**2.** Policy levers and contexts shaping educational outcomes	**3. Antecedents or constraints that contextualise policy**
I. Individual participants in education and learning	1.I The quality and distribution of individual educational outcomes	2.I Individual attitudes, engagement, and behaviour	3.I Background characteristics of the individual learners
II. Instructional settings	1.II The quality of instructional delivery	2.II Pedagogy and learning practices and classroom climate	3.II Student learning conditions and teacher working conditions
III. Providers of educational services	1.III The output of educational institutions and institutional performance	2.III School environment and organisation	3.III Characteristics of the service providers and their communities
IV. Education system as a whole	1.IV The overall performance of the education system	2.IV System-wide institutional settings, resource allocations, and policies	3.IV The national educational, social, economic, and demographic contexts

Source: 2006 OECD Education at a Glance (200, p.19)

While quantitative data collected from such secondary sources may not always be complete or correct, a further concern for this type of research study involves external validity threats. As Creswell points out,

> External validity threats arise when experimenters draw incorrect inferences from the sample data to other persons, other settings, and past or future situations. (Creswell 2003, p.171)

It is therefore necessary to employ a mixed method approach that complements quantitative and qualitative analysis to minimise distortions and discrepancies and to produce our best educated guess concerning the current state of education worldwide.

Other variables to consider include a shift in attitude to viewing education as a universal whole. UNESCO has a mandate to education that reflects a commitment toward greater inclusivity and building quality teaching and research capacities for society at all levels.

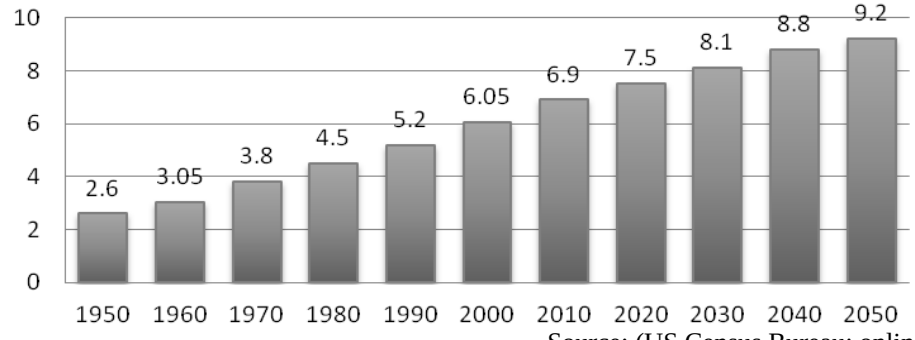
UNESCO's specific education principles are as follows:

> **First**, education is a basic human right and a universal human value: learning and education are ends in themselves, to be aimed at by both individuals and societies and to be promoted and made available over the entire lifetime of each individual;

> **Second**, education, formal and non-formal, must serve society as an instrument for fostering the creation, advancement and dissemination of knowledge and science, and by making knowledge and teaching universally available;
>
> **Third**, the triple goals of equity, relevance and excellence must prevail in any policy of education, and the search for a harmonious combination of these goals is a crucial task for all those involved in educational planning and practice;
>
> **Fourth**, renewal and any corresponding reform of education must be the result of profound and thoughtful examination and understanding of what is known about successful practice and policy, as well as understanding of the specific conditions and requirements relevant to each particular situation; they must be decided upon by mutual agreement through appropriate pacts among the parties concerned, as a medium-term process;
>
> **Fifth**, while the existence of a wide variety of economic, social, and cultural situations clearly calls for differing approaches to educational development, all approaches must take into account basic and agreed-upon values and concerns of the international community and of the United Nations system: human rights, tolerance and understanding, democracy, responsibility, universality, cultural identity, the search for peace, the preservation of the environment, the sharing of knowledge, alleviation of poverty, population control, health; and
>
> **Sixth**, education is the responsibility of the whole of society: all persons involved and all partnerships - in addition to those incumbent on institutions - must be taken fully into account. (UNESCO's Mandate to Education: online)

Over the past 30 years, however, dramatic changes have occurred in demographics, the economy, and educational capacity-building in the Asia-Pacific region. According to the United States Census Bureau, the world population is 6,823,450,351 (online). Despite projections that world population growth is beginning to slow down after it peaked in the late 1980s (Ibid), there is increasing concern about sustainability and, for the purposes of this discussion, educational provision. Figure 3 represents the increases in world population from 1950 to 2050.

Figure 3. World Population (1950-2050) *in billions*



Source: (US Census Bureau: online)

From an economic perspective, the benefits for nation-states suggest that one additional year of education increases the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) between three and six percent (OECD Education at a Glance 2006, p.156). Although not always comparable across all countries, the economic benefits for individuals suggest that the higher level of education one attains, the higher the employment rate and average earnings one will reap (OECD Education at a Glance 2007, pp.132,156). In estimating the macroeconomic returns to education, the OECD states,

> A large body of empirical research has confirmed a positive link between education and productivity. Better educated employees are generally more productive, and may also raise the productivity of co-workers. Higher stocks of human capital facilitate investments in physical capital and enhance the development and diffusion of new technologies which, in turn, affects output per worker. (OECD Education at a Glance 2006, p. 156)

Worldwide, while education is not always perceived as an investment, especially when there are concerns about varying levels of educational quality, future employment, and maintenance of one's traditions and/or customs, it is believed that in order to build teaching and research capacity, development should start at the tertiary level. According to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, "…tertiary education is necessary for the effective creation, dissemination and application of knowledge for building technical and professional capacity" (2002, p.204). Therefore, it is necessary to begin researching the effects of increasing participatory rates in universal primary education and the amount of physical places offered to such students should they qualify and be wanting to pursue tertiary education studies in 2020 and beyond.

The Asia-Pacific region has experienced significant success in pursuing the Millennium Development Goals projected for 2015, particularly universal primary education, yet quality of both teaching and research still remain poor. Access continues to be an issue, and according to the Global Monitoring Reports (2005; 2008; 2010) (see Table 1), the increases in primary school enrolments as indicated in Figure 4, while impressive, will not be met.

Figure 4. Link between EFA and Cross-Border Higher Education

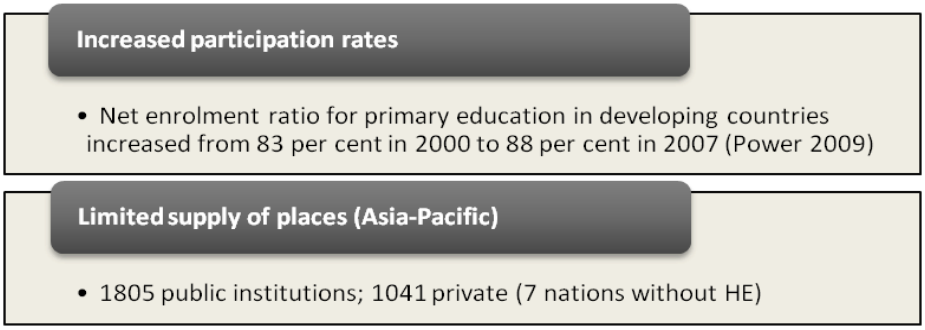


Table 1. Primary school enrolments by country (numbers in 1000's)

Country	1998	1999	2001	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Australia		1885	1914			1953		1973
Bangladesh	17627	17622	17659		17953			16313
Bhutan	78	81	88			99	106	
Brunei Darussalam	45	46	44			46		46
Cambodia	2127	2127	2729			2695		2480
China	135480		125757				108925	107395
Cook Islands	3	3	3			2		2
Fiji	116	116	115			114		104
India	110986	110986	113883			146375	139170	
Indonesia			28926			29150		29797
Japan	7692	7692	7326			7232		7220
Kiribati	18	14				16	16	
Laos (PDR)	828	828	853			891		892
Macao SAR China	47	47	44			37		33
Malaysia	2877	3040	3025		3159		3133	
Maldives	74	74	71			58		50
Marshall Islands	8	8	9			8		8
Mongolia	251	251	241			251		239
Myanmar	4733	4733	4789			4948		5014
Nauru	2				1			1
Nepal	3349	3588	3854				4503	4419
New Zealand		361	356			353		349
North Korea		3845	4100				4031	3838
Pakistan					14562	17258		17979
Palau	2	2	2			2		2
Papua New Guinea	581	623	663	681			532	
Philippines	12503	12503	12826			13084		13145
Samoa	27	27	29			32		30
Singapore		300				290		301
Solomon Islands		58				73	75	
Sri Lanka	1802		1763		1612.3		1612	
Thailand	6120	6120	6228				5844	5565
Timor-Leste			184			178		174
Tonga	16	17	17			17	17	
Tuvalu	1	1	1		1		1	1
Vanuatu	34	34	36			39		38
Viet Nam	10250	10250	9337			7773		7041
France	3944	3944	3808			4015		4106
Norway	412	412	429			430		431
United States	24938	24938	24855			24455		24492

Sources: UNESCO Global Monitoring Report (2005; 2008; 2010)

Estimating Future Primary School Enrolments

Two methods for deriving a model to fit the data (see Table 1) were considered:

- Linear Regression: this method finds a straight line of best fit through the given data points; and
- Cubic Splines: this method fits a series of curved lines to the given data points.

The *R* data analysis package was used to perform the modeling, using the *lm* function for linear regression, and the *splinefun* function for splines. These methods are compared using the data for Nepal and Japan in Table 2, which shows model estimations based only on the data from the Global Monitoring Report for 2008, which provides figures only up to 2006.

Table 2. Comparison of linear regression and spline modeling using data up to 2006 (Enrolments in 1000's)

		Nepal				Japan	
Year	**Actual**	**Linear**	**Spline**	**Year**	**Actual**	**Linear**	**Spline**
1998	3349	3479	3349	1998	7692	7686	7692
1999	3588	3619	3588	1999	7692	7615	7692
2000		3758	3745	2000		7544	7535
2001	3854	3897	3854	2001	7326	7473	7326
2002		4037	3966	2002		7402	7200
2003		4176	4090	2003		7331	7162
2004		4315	4223	2004		7259	7183
2005		4454	4362	2005	7232	7188	7232
2006	4503	4594	4503	2006		7117	7286
2007		4733	4645	2007		7046	7341
2008		4872	4787	2008		6975	7395
2009		5012	4929	2009		6903	7449
2010		5151	5070	2010		6832	7504
2011		5290	5212	2011		6761	7558
2012		5430	5354	2012		6690	7612
2013		5569	5496	2013		6619	7667
2014		5708	5638	2014		6548	7721
2015		5847	5780	2015		6476	7775

While the two methods result in similar extrapolated figures in the case of Nepal, they produce starkly different results in the case of Japan. For Japan, linear regression predicts future numbers to decrease, whereas the spline model predicts future numbers to increase. The results are shown in Figures 5 and 6.

Figure 5. Point graph of interpolation results for Nepal data up to 2006

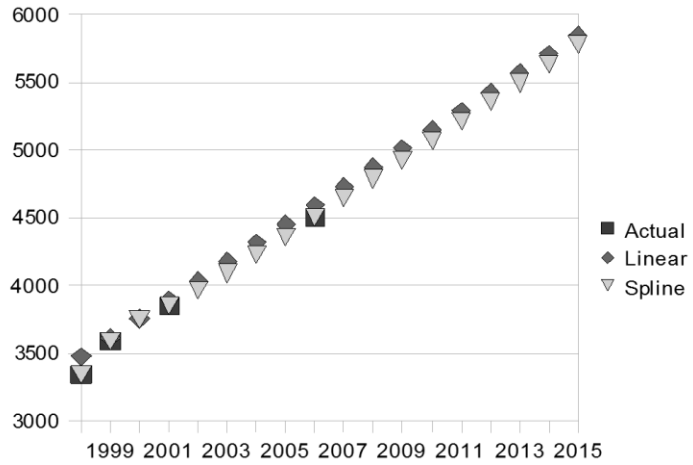
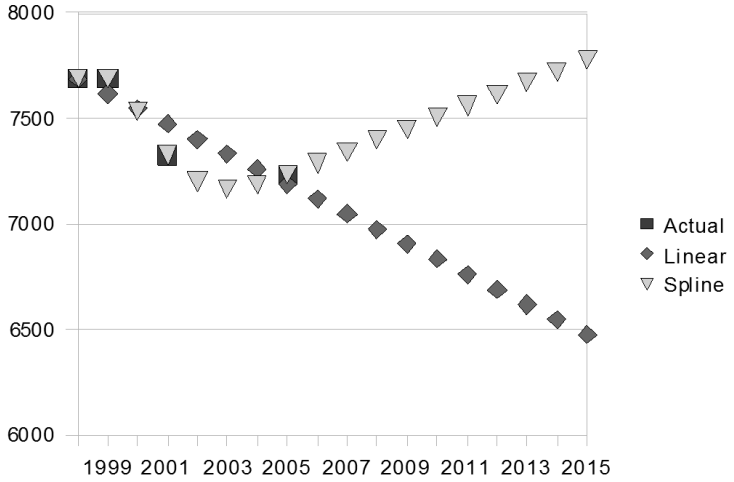


Figure 6. Point graph of interpolation results for Japan data up to 2006



The statistics for Japan could indicate a rapid decline from 1999 to 2001 followed by a slower decline from 2001 to 2005, or it could be interpreted (as the spline model does) as a dip in enrolment numbers in the years 2000 to 2003 followed by an upturn starting in 2004. With only the given data points from the Global Monitoring Report for 2008, it is impossible to know which interpretation is correct. The Global Monitoring Report for 2010 includes extra figures for some countries, including those for Japan and Nepal in 2007. These show that through 2007 in the case of Japan, actual recorded enrolment continued to decline and, in the case of Nepal, increase. Since this finding tallies with trends identified utilising linear regression, this was the model chosen to extrapolate future estimates of primary school enrolment for all countries. Many other factors and models could be used instead. Table 3 displays the results of this analysis.

Table 3. Projections of primary school enrolments using linear regression by country

Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Australia	2006500	2017250	2028000	2038750	2049500	2060250
Bangladesh	16517960	16406150	16294340	16182530	16070720	15958910
Bhutan	117583	120898	124213	127528	130843	134158
Brunei Darussalam	46200	46300	46400	46500	46600	46700
Cambodia	2813867	2861650	2909433	2957217	3005000	3052783
China	97020490	93824950	90629420	87433880	84238340	81042810
Cook Islands	1533	1400	1267	1133	1000	867
Fiji	104333	103250	102167	101083	100000	98917
India	161293000	165806800	170320600	174834300	179348100	183861900
Indonesia	30041430	30173860	30306290	30438710	30571140	30703570
Japan	6982533	6926300	6870067	6813833	6757600	6701367
Kiribati	15680	15640	15600	15560	15520	15480
Laos (PDR)	922933	931000	939067	947133	955200	963267
Macao SAR China	28667	27050	25433	23817	22200	20583
Malaysia	3286646	3315199	3343752	3372305	3400858	3429412
Maldives	43400	40650	37900	35150	32400	29650
Marshall Is.	8067	8050	8033	8017	8000	7983
Mongolia	239933	239100	238267	237433	236600	235767
Myanmar	5109267	5142500	5175733	5208967	5242200	5275433
Nauru	500	381	262	143	24	-95
Nepal	4894293	5016305	5138317	5260329	5382341	5504353
New Zealand	345300	343950	342600	341250	339900	338550
North Korea	3940151	3938173	3936196	3934218	3932240	3930263
Pakistan	21396000	22423790	23451570	24479360	25507140	26534930
Palau	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000
Papua New Guinea	574461	569631	564801	559971	555141	550311
Philippines	13429530	13506700	13583870	13661030	13738200	13815370
Samoa	32733	33200	33667	34133	34600	35067
Singapore	295173	294885	294596	294308	294019	293731
Solomon Is.	85023	87477	89930	92384	94837	97291
Sri Lanka	1487342	1460248	1433153	1406059	1378964	1351869
Thailand	5526737	5469216	5411695	5354174	5296653	5239132
Timor-Leste	169357	167714	166071	164429	162786	161143
Tonga	17413	17488	17563	17638	17713	17787
Tuvalu	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000
Vanuatu	40600	41150	41700	42250	42800	43350
Viet Nam	5921800	5545750	5169700	4793650	4417600	4041550
France	4117933	4137250	4156567	4175883	4195200	4214517
Norway	440400	442600	444800	447000	449200	451400
United States	24256130	24196200	24136270	24076330	24016400	23956470

Estimating Future Primary School Aged Cohorts

The base data comes from the United States Census Bureau, specifically, from the interactive population dynamics web page extracted in July 2009 at *www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb/country.php*. Population cohorts estimations are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Target population estimates

	Primary Group		US Census Bureau Population Estimates		Target for 2015
Country	Start Age	Finish Age	5-9 Pop	10-14 Pop	Primary Pop
Australia	5	11	1362511	1342932	1899684
Bangladesh	6	12	17305937	18086615	24696719
Bhutan	6	12	65730	68778	93851
Brunei Darussalam	5	11	33122	33590	46558
Cambodia	6	12	1671198	1532204	2256281
PPR China, Hong Kong	6	12	88220160	81908871	119721451
Cook Islands	5	11	705	788	1020
Fiji	6	12	99784	95134	136908
India	6	12	116792881	117328536	163831426
Indonesia	7	13	22010903	22499323	31206000
Japan	6	12	5054605	5783721	7513917
Kiribati	6	12	15475	14058	20815
Laos (PDR)	6	12	1008335	930478	1364955
Macao SAR China	5	11	27964	30068	39991
Malaysia	6	12	2764581	2675828	3817162
Maldives	6	12	27062	26586	37601
Marshall Islands	6	12	8868	8075	11939
Mongolia	7	13	295525	272640	395427
Myanmar	5	11	3836050	3988684	5431524
Nauru	6	12	1642	1609	2279
Nepal	6	12	3169261	3412897	4583147
New Zealand	5	11	297121	290990	413517
North Korea	6	12	1583384	1756333	2320507
Pakistan	5	11	20496417	21168977	28964008
Palau	6	12	1368	1812	2182
Papua New Guinea	6	12	768598	750432	1065138
Philippines	6	12	12213863	11623891	16745425
Samoa	5	11	29428	27135	40282
Singapore	6	12	209191	217879	298080
Solomon Islands	6	12	80601	79675	112286
Sri Lanka	5	11	1712482	1745062	2410507
Thailand	6	12	4341214	4343536	6079093
Timor Leste	7	13	137769	128028	185084
Tonga	6	12	12920	12771	17999
Tuvalu	7	13	1327	1167	1730
Vanuatu	6	12	21787	21895	30567
Viet Nam	6	12	7669081	757618	6589836
France	6	12	4110967	4064383	5727403
Norway	6	12	265704	287374	384988
United States	6	12	21707273	21657676	30360424

This page estimates population cohorts (see Table 4) in groups of 5 years, that 0-4, 5-9, 10-14. The estimate used for the target primary aged cohort (that is, 5-11, 6-12 or 7-13) are the relevant proportions of the 5-9 and 10-14 cohorts estimated by the United States Census Bureau for 2015.

Projections for 2015

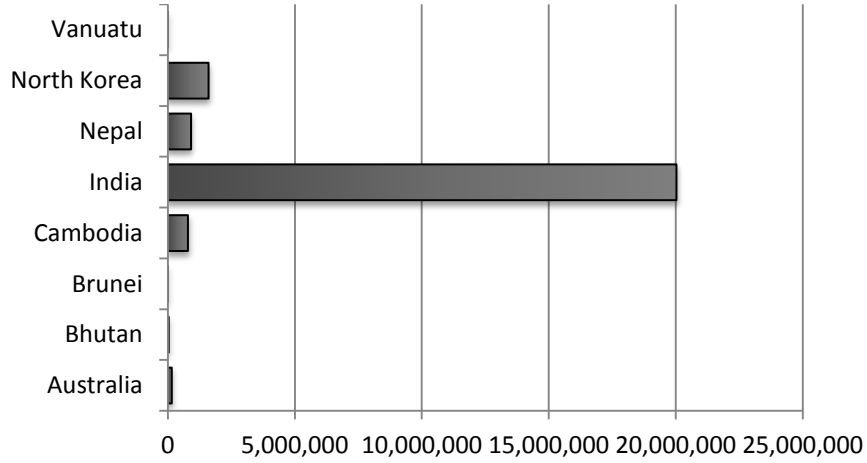
Table 5 shows the projected primary school enrolments versus target primary aged population cohort for 2015.

Table 5. Projected enrolments versus targets for 2015

Country	Target for 2015 Primary Pop	Projected Enrolment in 2015	Projected Surplus/Shortfall
Australia	1899684	2060250	-160566
Bangladesh	24696719	15958908	8737810
Bhutan	93851	134157	-40307
Brunei Darussalam	46558	46700	-142
Cambodia	2256281	3052784	-796503
PPR China, Hong Kong	119721451	81042793	38678657
Cook Islands	1020	867	154
Fiji	136908	98917	37991
India	163831426	183861926	-20030499
Indonesia	31206000	30703569	502432
Japan	7513917	6701366	812550
Kiribati	20815	15480	5335
Laos (PDR)	1364955	963267	401688
Macao SAR China	39991	20583	19408
Malaysia	3817162	3429412	387750
Maldives	37601	29650	7951
Marshall Islands	11939	7983	3956
Mongolia	395427	235767	159660
Myanmar	5431524	5275434	156090
Nauru	2279	-95	2374
Nepal	4583147	5504353	-921206
New Zealand	413517	338550	74967
North Korea	2320507	3930263	-1609756
Pakistan	28964008	26534925	2429083
Palau	2182	2000	182
Papua New Guinea	1065138	22225081	-21159943
Philippines	16745425	13815363	2930062
Samoa	40282	35067	5215
Singapore	298080	293731	4349
Solomon Islands	112286	97291	14995
Sri Lanka	2410507	1351870	1058637
Thailand	6079093	5239131	839961
Timor-Leste	185084	161143	23941
Tonga	17999	17787	211
Tuvalu	1730	1000	730
Vanuatu	30567	43350	-12783
Viet Nam	6589836	4041549	2548287
France	5727403	4214516	1512887
Norway	384988	451400	-66412
United States	30360424	23956463	6403961

If placed in graph form in Figure 7, the following eight countries have not only met enrolment targets for 2015, they have surpassed them. While further research is necessary to determine what may be the main causes for such surpluses, one could assume that increased fertility rates, better childhood health, and increased mobility may offer some form of explanation. It is important that each country's context is taken into consideration.

Figure 7. Asia-Pacific surpluses in participatory rates at primary schools



In Figure 8, however, it is noted that 29 Asia-Pacific countries will not meet enrolment targets for 2015. This leads to further questions about the political, economic, and socio-cultural elements that may impede meeting benchmarks. Questions about political will, affordability, assumptions made that education should be seen as an investment, and educational equality and access require further examination.

If one were to recognise the magnitude of students going through the system, particularly between 2010 and 2020, this research shows that student demand will far outstrip educational supply in the Asia-Pacific region. This will occur at all levels of education. Notwithstanding the concerns about increased student expectations, especially in cases where it is generally assumed that an education will lead to greater employment opportunities and higher standards of living, increased competition and mobility for skilled migration will likely rise exponentially, as well as an increase in economic refugees looking for better conditions and opportunities.

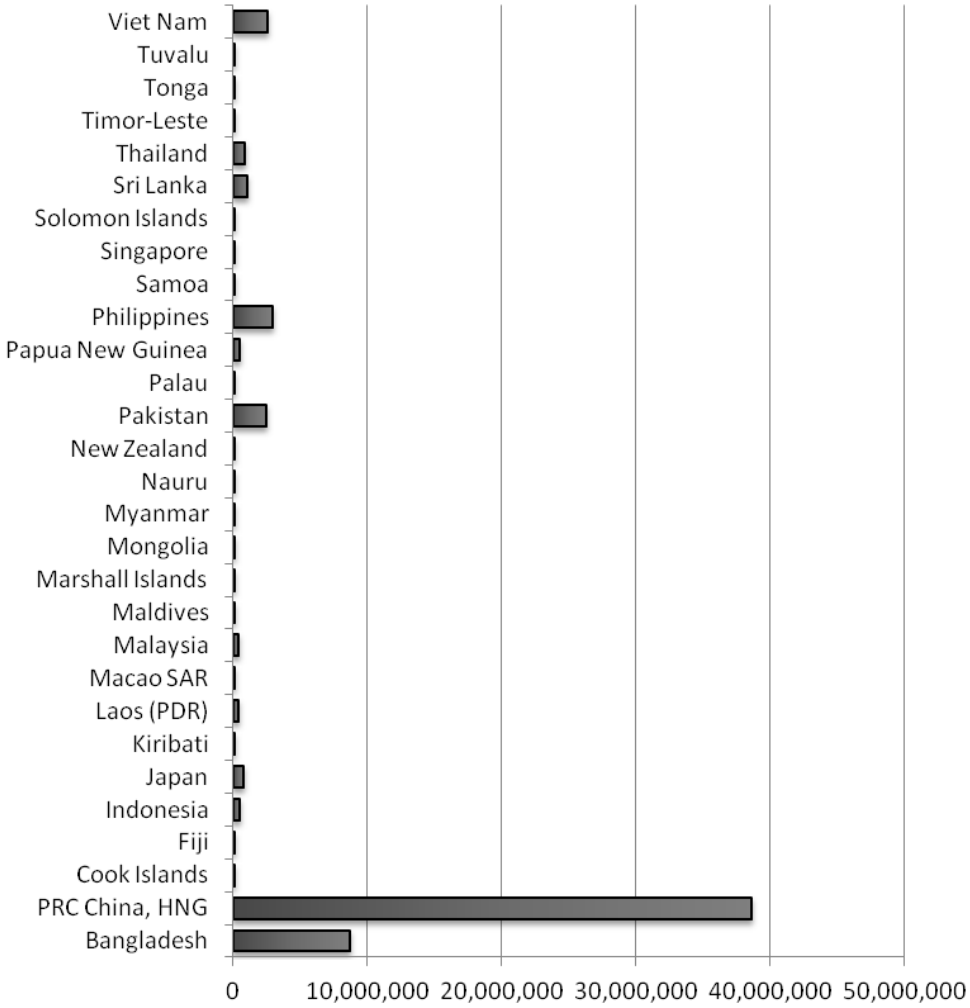
Cross-Border Higher Education

A discussion of developments in cross-border higher education is relevant to this presentation because they affect accommodation of students who have completed earlier grades and extend tertiary opportunity. Cross-border higher education refers to institutions of higher education that have undergone the 'multinationalization' process (see Figure 9). This involves academic programs

and institutions from one country, which are offered in other countries (Altbach 2004, p.3). Expansion is due in part to:

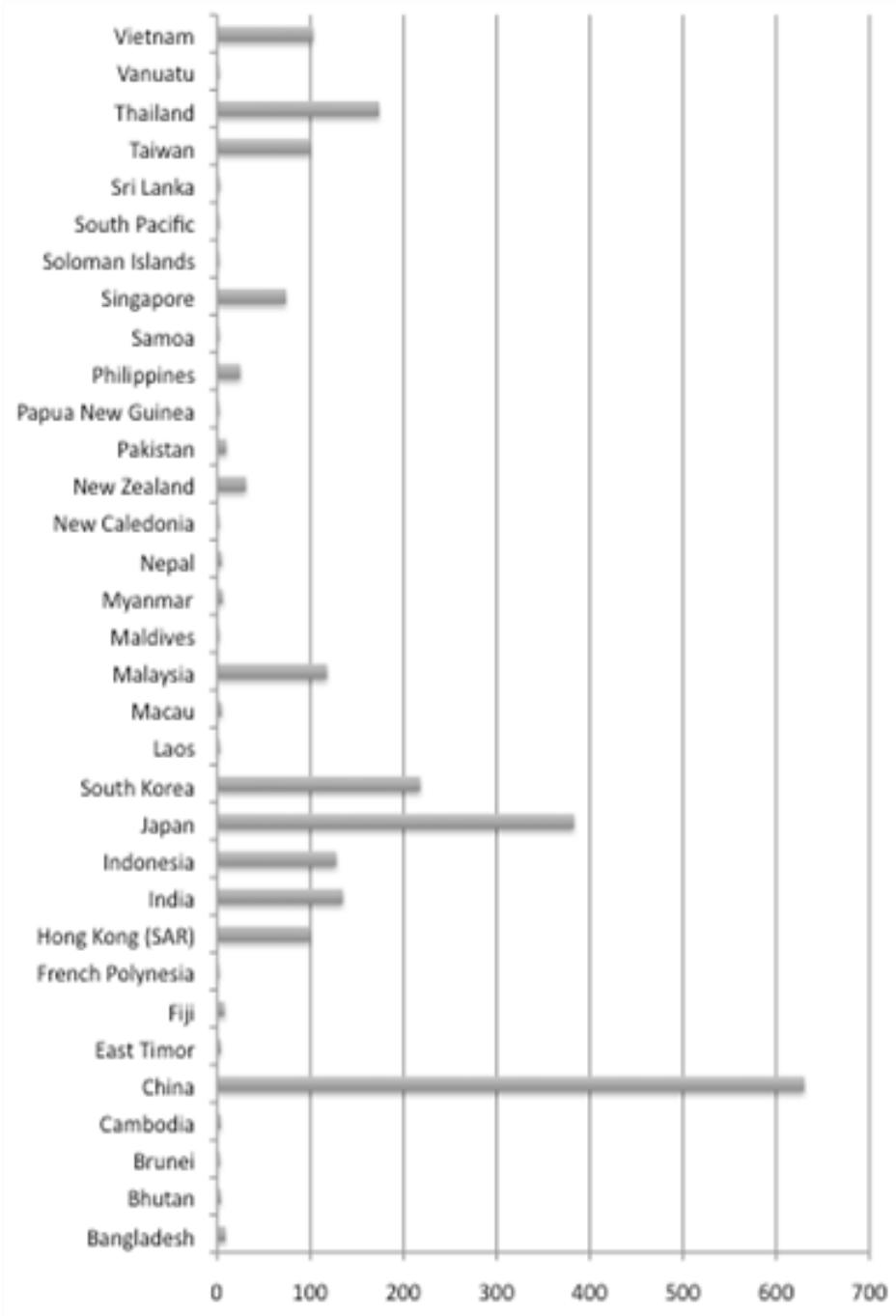
- Social demand for more places (choice)
- Differentiation in types of institutions (flexibility)
- Quality in education and instruction (quality)

Figure 8. Asia-Pacific shortfalls in participatory rates at primary schools



Cross-border provision of higher education refers to the act or agreement of providing institutional access of foreign providers from one country to another. Provisional agreements may be made at institutional, nation-state, and regional levels.

Figure 9. Cross-border higher education links according to country in the Asia-Pacific



Source: Universities Australia (May 2009).
International Links of Australian Universities, Canberra.

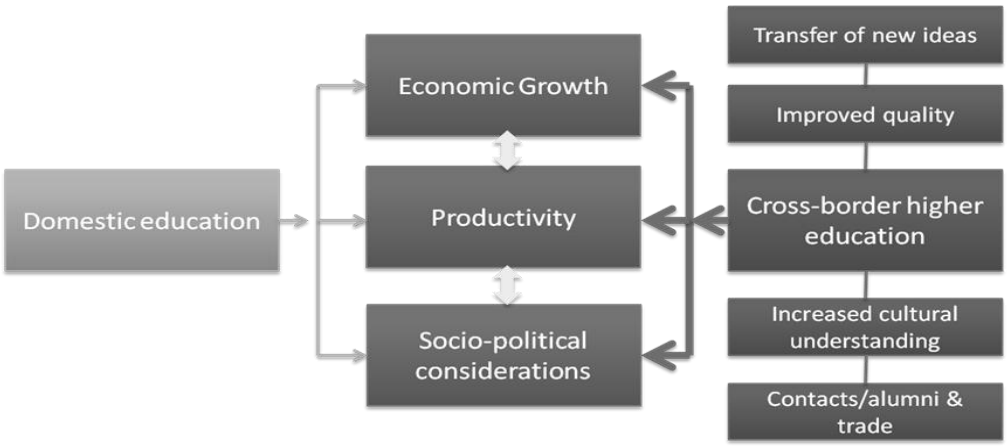
Types may include the following partnerships:

- Like-minded inter-institutional partnerships (Utrecht Network; Universitas 21; International Student Exchange Program (ISEP)).
- National, inter-state, and state partnerships (NUFFIC; Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE)).
- Inter-regional partnerships (Erasmus/Socrates I & II/Lifelong Learning Programme; CONAHEC; UMAP; Campus Asia Program).
- academic staff-initiated partnerships (e.g. Consortium for Sustainable Community Development and Planning).
- institution-initiated partnerships (e.g. UNU OpenCourseWare Portal; Association of Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning (ASAIHL)).
- cluster-type inter-institutional partnerships (e.g. Five Colleges).
- market-driven partnerships (e.g. American Institute for Foreign Studies (AIFS)).

Opportunities and Challenges

Cross-border provision of higher education has the potential to increase participation rates of students, improve the prospect of socio-economic development and productivity and, in developing countries in particular, offset costs where public monies may not be enough to sustain 'quality'. Figure 10 illustrates that if cross-border higher education were offered in tandem with domestic education of a given country, that further benefits would be made available such as new ideas, improved quality, increased cultural understanding, and larger social networks.

Figure 10. Global-North Perspective of Cross-Border HE Provision

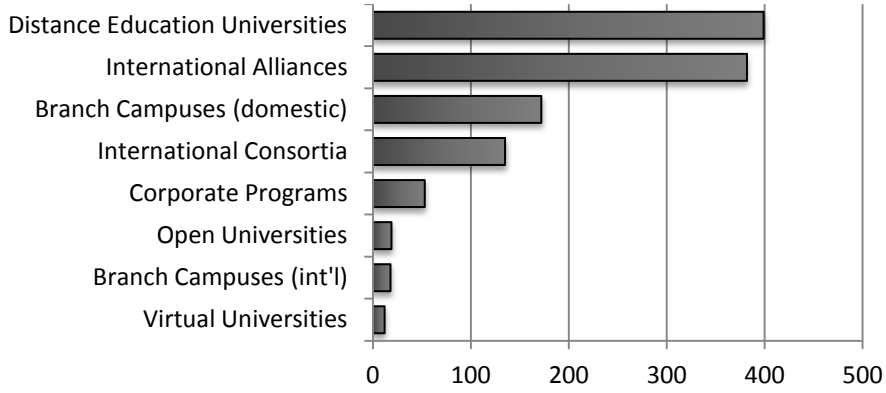


Modified version of APEC and International Education 08, The key ideas (1.1). Report for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace, Centre for International Economics, Canberra and Sydney.

The over-riding challenges concern that of a Global-North paradigm, which imposes specific norms, expectations, and measures. It is based on the premise

that education is valued as an investment in economic terms as well as social standards. Figure 11 shows the current distribution and types of cross-border higher education available worldwide.

Figure 11. Distribution and Types of Cross-Border Higher Education



It is hoped that such cross-border partnerships could help minimise the disparity between student demand and educational supply in the foreseeable future. Cross-border provision of higher education should be the product of a series of strategic inter-institutional decisions acted upon in a timely manner and addressing both need and contingency.

Concluding Remarks: The Risks and Benefits of International Education Comparisons

International education comparisons tend to promote the globalisation of education in terms of increased economic trade and human capital. The higher the quality and educational equity, the greater the benefits are to reap. However, risks tend to appear in those cases that are exceptions to the rule, a general lack of environmental contexts at school or local levels, simplistic prescriptions for change, or normative prescriptions of policy and practice. In this research, both quantitative and qualitative measures have been utilised to provide a comparative snapshot of the state of education currently and in the future in the Asia-Pacific region. The purpose has been to recognise the enormity of the task in attempting to offer universal primary education for all around the globe, identifying the problems associated with meeting targets by 2015, and meeting the rising concerns about demand outstripping supply. This research suggests that cross-border provision may be a possible solution, at least at the tertiary level.

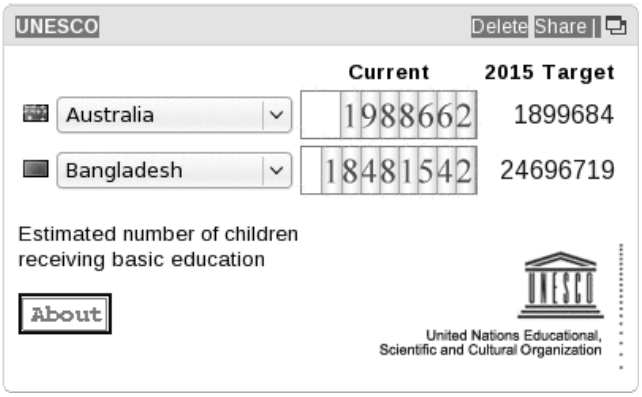
This research, however, did not stop there. A considerable amount of effort has been made to offer UNESCO a widget that simplifies the data which has been compiled from the Global Monitoring Reports (2005; 2007; 2010). This widget comes in the form of an open-sourced igoogle gadget, which may be made

available freely to those who wish to keep count of the Education for All initiative in the Asia-Pacific.

An Incrementally Updated Web-based Monitor

The developed igoogle gadget displays estimated current enrolment numbers for selected countries and target estimates of the primary school aged population in 2015. It is updated every second, simulating a ticking advancement of enrolments towards the target. Figure 12 illustrates the layout of the widget.

Figure 12. igoogle gadget layout



The years are converted into seconds since 0:0 1/1/2008 assuming that the years in the Table 1 represent end or year figures and a standard year of 365.25 days. Linear regression models are derived for each country as follows:

Estimated current enrolment = Y-intercept + Time(sec) since 2008 × Slope

The widget uses the *jOdometer* plugin from the *jQuery Project*. It is available from the website: *http://www.google.com/ig/adde?hl=eN&moduleurl=http://turing.une.edu.au/~neil/Widget/unescoEd.xml&source=imag*

The widget is designed for making comparisons with other countries and tailored specifically for countries in the Asia-Pacific region. It offers a quick reference to the state of education in meeting the Education for All initiative of 2015.

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International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives
ISSN 1443-1475 © 2011 *Shannon Research Press*. http://iejcomparative.org

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