

Guest Editors' Introduction: Globalisation, westernisation and Sino-Australian educational reform

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The changes in the social and economic circumstances which characterise the present society and hence education make it essential to rethink the relation of curriculum, its purposes and shapes, to the social and economic environment of the near future. Curricular changes as a result of globalisation have led to a greater variety of theoretical perspectives, methodologies, voices, and accordingly pedagogical strategies. The challenges posed by the worldwide flow of people are deeply embedded in transnational processes. Transnational curriculum development therefore involves the employment of a framework, a method and an agenda that is international in scope. It involves linking the analysis and location of individuals, small communities and even nations across the boundaries of state and nation. Unprecedented migration, a core dimension of contemporary globalisation, therefore challenges transnational curriculum development. In a world of increasing human mobility, many curricular outcomes are shaped by transnational interactions. The enormity of contemporary transnational mobility is illustrated by the case of Australia. In the past half century, Australia's resident population has doubled, while the movement of people across its international boundaries (that is, into and out of Australia) has increased nearly one hundredfold.

So ever since globalisation became a buzzword, the world has changed. Technological innovations and global restructuring has led to a new economic, cultural and political order. Some theorists like Latouche (1996) use the concept of globalisation to explain westernisation of the whole world while other theorists argue that globalisation can be used to explain the increased spread of capitalism around the world (Ferguson, 1992). With the former, globalisation is equated to the loss of autonomy. The standards, regimes, and regulations that come to be adopted by countries in response to globalisation are made by Western countries according to their own values and interests. According to the latter position, globalisation represents the extension of capitalist modes of production across the globe and signifies that capitalism has entered a new stage of its development. Still others argue that globalisation increases in homogeneity while simultaneously producing diversity and heterogeneity through hybridisation (Giddens 1990, Appadurai 1991, 1996; Featherstone 1995; Robertson 1995). So globalisation has not only economic implications but also political and cultural ones. It is evident that globalisation is contested as a concept as much as a practice experienced in people's 24/7 lives. It has both positive and negative meanings for the economy, polity, culture and indeed everyday life and involves an overall process of social change.

Globalism is the term used to name the major ideological force and political projects used to reshape international relationships, community relations and the individual's place in them. A plethora of 'new' keywords have emerged to name aspects of this political program. Concepts such as 'trans-national families', 'knowledge workers', 'renegotiation of identities', 'hybridity of cultural identities', are among the range of complementary armoury used to



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support its value as an ideological tool of twenty-first century capitalism. As people integrate into new 'host' societies and renegotiate their identities in foreign environments, new analytical tools to help understand recent processes of increasing flows of people across international boundaries have emerged.

For Australia, globalisation was taken in the 1980s to mean the creation of a 'technologically advanced, low labour-cost, export-oriented, internationally competitive economy' (Foley, 1999, p.68). A major focus for reform has been the internationalisation of education especially the recruitment of full fee-paying students from overseas. Since then Australian government policy responses to globalisation have involved stimulating export production; realigning government expenditure; reducing real wages; providing publicly funded incentives for foreign investment, production and consumption; devaluing and floating the currency; reducing government regulation of business activity while increasing it in areas such as education and training, and curtailing the role of organised labour in the political economy by demobilising the labour movement. The justification for these changes has been that there was no real choice to de-industrialisation other than declining living standards and economic vulnerability (Frankel, 2004). Since the late 1970s, with Deng Xiaoping's opening up of China, building socialism/capitalism with Chinese characteristics, and the saturation of Western consumer markets, mass production has been moved to cheaper labour areas, resulting in the de-industrialisation of Australian and other similar economies (Deng, 1995; Luen, 2001). Education in China and Australia has changed markedly as a result of this transnational interplay.

The astute build-up of knowledge workers, foreign currencies, trade surpluses and economic capacities in China serves as a new determining force in global politics and trade. It provides new avenues and challenges for citizens in Australia, China and elsewhere as they become the new knowledge workers of the 21st century. Keping (2005) argues that from 1978 to 2003, the Chinese gross national product increased from 362.4 billion Yuan (US\$44.2 billion) to 11,690 billion Yuan (US\$1,425.6 billion). It has increased 8.4 times with an average yearly growth rate of over 9 percent. This growth rate is much higher than the 2.5 percent average GNP growth rate of developed countries; the 5 percent growth rate of developing countries, and the 3 percent average world growth rate during the same period. China has registered the fastest economic growth in the world in this period. High-speed economic growth has been accompanied by a 22-fold expansion in the scale of foreign trade over the past twenty-two years. At the same time, China successfully protected itself from the shocks of the Asian financial crisis in the 1990s, and realised its goal of entering the World Trade Organization (WTO) after ten years of assiduous effort. The Chinese Government rose above ideological differences and developed bilateral and multilateral relations with various countries and regions in the areas of politics, economy, and culture. Australia is one of the major beneficiaries of well-trained and efficient knowledge workers from China. As such these transitions in globalisation have emerged as key issues in enhancing the importance of Sino-Australian research in curriculum and related fields of education.

The changes contemporary and continuing in curriculum are responses to and expression of the processes of global restructuring, and are held to offer gains for everyone. Much attention has been given to the technical aspects of curriculum restructuring in response to and as an expression of contemporary transitions in globalisation (Tomlinson, 1999). Changes occurring in particular curriculum areas such as language and education are affected by decisions made nationally and globally about economic, cultural and political issues (Stromquist and Monkman, 2000). Much research into curriculum restructuring has focused on the technical and managerial processes, dealing with the issues of 'cost minimisation', 'downsizing', 'job shedding', and 'efficiency gains.' The resulting costs of the globally dominant technicists and rationalist approach might be seen as including uncertainty of



employment and mass casualisation of those who do curriculum work- whether teachers or policy-makers. For curriculum workers who experience globalisation as Westernisation or Americanisation they are confronted with questions such as: How can the curriculum reproduce cultural traditions in the face of the restructuring and transformations effected through globalisation? How might the curriculum provide access to the dominating forms of power while at the same time valuing and promoting diverse cultural heritages? By providing access to the dominating forms, the curriculum contributes to their dominance. By denying access to these forms marginalisation is perpetuated. In societies that recognise the value and importance of such forms of dominance as the English language, these raise serious curriculum dilemmas. The spatial displacements of capital into 'cheap' labour areas such as China has seen efforts to reconstruct curricula in ways intended to better serve the Australian economy. The outcome and consequences of these processes is held to be the formation of 'productive, flexible, internationally competitive workplaces' (Foley, 1999, p.85). However, some see globalisation as having effects on Minority World nations such as Australia, that have resulted in the curriculum being more workplace oriented, more entrepreneurial, and more accountable through quality assurance regimes.

The papers in this special issue of *Transnational Curriculum Inquiry*, were selected because they investigated how educators in China and Australia engaged with, and responded to the *local experiences of globalisation* manifested by contextually specific changes in curricula so as to better position themselves and/or others in the changing local/global order. Together these papers provide insights into what educators in China and Australia understand to be the social, political and cultural issues that could help position the curriculum, advantageously in the new global ordering of things. Further these papers identify the curriculum dilemmas educators are experiencing with regard to societal, cultural, religious or language concerns in the context of the regional and global environment. These papers help us to understand a little of what educators in China and Australia regard as desirable (and undesirable) features of (a) the new global order and (b) ways of engaging with, and responding to the everyday *practices of globalisation* as well as to the insecurities of globalisation, including those arising from the trans-national movement of people. This collection of papers contributes to advancing Sino-Australian curriculum engagement by investigating educators' responses to, and engagements with emerging global/local issues of mutual interest.

Ravinder Sidhu and Pam Christie discuss asylum seekers and refugees in their consideration of curriculum assumptions about globalisation. The paper explores the mechanisms that inform the governance of 'marginal and peripheral' subjects and spaces of globalisation, using Australia's policies towards asylum seekers and refugees and their education as a focal point. Viewing asylum seekers and refugees as subjects of globalisation within a Foucauldian framework, they suggest that current ways of ordering and thinking about the space/time dimensions of globalisation may work to render peripheral spaces and subjects invisible and/or without rights in the state/citizen order. In regards to curriculum practices, they suggest the importance of recognising the spatial and temporal influences that operate in knowledge production. An ethical approach towards curriculum is recommended and one that will question the existing power relations that influence the production and circulation of knowledge. Finally, they explore the possibilities for subjects of knowledge to challenge and redress the epistemic damage arising from existing regimes of knowledge in light of the ethical codes that are available in the public sphere.

Questioning whether cultural identity has ruptured or continued among Indian immigrants in Australia is the topic of Loshini Naidoo's paper. To understand the global reframing of cultural identity in Indian immigrant communities, globalisation theories from the perspective of the social sciences and empirical evidence from studies on Indian migrant families in



Australia were analysed. Naidoo concluded that while identity is predominately transformed as a result of globalisation, amongst Indian immigrants in Australia, this has not ruptured completely and still continues despite internal conflicts. This wave of transmigration represents discursive and multilayered narratives of social displacement that bring together different language abilities, needs, expectations and aspirations, together with different histories and experiences of cultural and social fractionalisation. The subsequent dynamic reconstitution of group and individual identities within adoptive societies engenders new sets of social relations that fracture previous certainties within the nation-state. Naidoo argues that hook's teaching approach – 'engaged pedagogy' and social justice education can address the curricular issues raised by this transnational movement of people across the globe. The point being that knowledge is relational and the dominant discourse of academic knowledge is not value-free. These values of difference amongst marginalised groups need to be re-discovered from a starting point of trust and mutual respect if new curriculum initiatives are to grow. From this, it is argued; identities will strengthen, with consequent effects on community cohesion and social growth.

Fabiansson and Healey's research is based on interviews with local government councillors, council staff and a survey of 751 rural students, between 14 and 21 years of age who were attending local secondary high schools and living in two rural communities in Queensland (Australia). This research explores students' preferred education trajectories and work aspirations, and community representatives' perception of young people's future in rural communities. The findings indicate community awareness of the changing situation where females aspire to university education and professions beyond local family traditions and local employment opportunities. Males are still following strong traditional education pathways of mining and farming within their communities. The technologies of production and the consequential competitiveness that results from this, led to the downward spiral affecting areas. This led to the ensuing loss of population from these areas, the outflow of economic and social infrastructure, with governments withdrawing services, businesses relocating elsewhere and young people moving away to urban areas. This reaffirms the notion that education, vocational, training and curricula have become essential requirements for competing in local / global labour markets. With the globalisation of a specialised workforce, the education period has become an accepted phase between childhood and adulthood, giving young people the freedom to pursue education for professional gains and work opportunities, as well as for personal satisfaction. Transnational movements and globalisation operate in and emerge out of local contexts in a relationship that is in flux and as such challenges not only thinking about the local/global dualisms but also of the implications for transnational curriculum development.

Anne Power's paper discusses the journey of a teacher using Asian arts and literature with students in middle and primary school years. From the perspective of the external 'Other', Powers' chronicles and interprets the classroom practice of a teacher who had completed an extended course of professional development at the university. At one level, the narrative focuses, at one level, on engaging students with material that encourages understanding and admiration for different cultural expressions. At another level, the teacher's aspirations for her work in the high school setting. She shows how the Teaching Studies of Asia program provided practical application of the theory that understanding another culture requires both knowledge and the development of attitudes and values. It also argued that a re-orientation of Australian curriculum to include Asian frames of reference can be justified on the grounds of intellectual and cultural imperatives alone without reference to economic imperatives such as skilled migration and trade but of course to do so would be naive. This observation of a teacher's journey is part of a broader context of social and cultural research. Teachers are encouraged to reflect critically on their actions; and be aware that they can in a small but



nonetheless significant way influence where society is going. More importantly however, the relational approach between transnational communities and Asian arts and literature has opened up spaces for a specifically Australian inflection to, and extension of, current articulations of transnationalism and curriculum inquiry.

Similarly, White's paper points to the impacts of globalisation on Australian university education and curricula. He highlights both the opportunities and constraints that globalisation has brought for university academics, and the growing need for academics to position curriculum and pedagogy within virtual spaces. His paper presents a case study of an Australian mathematics educator involved in pre-service education, and shows how the educator responded to the challenges imposed by globalisation in the Australian Higher Education Sector. He presents data involving a Japanese teacher professional learning process implemented in Australia and Malaysia. This paper indicates the need for academics to embrace online teaching and learning technologies, as a response to commodification of education in a globalised world. Further, it provides valuable insights to Australian educators in dealing with a vital question about the transportability of teaching and learning strategies across countries in a globalised context. It encourages educators to consider the interplay of global and local processes on mathematics curriculum in the 21st century.

In an age of globalisation, curriculum conversations tend to be dominated by English. In this context, the next three papers highlight the need for educators to reflect on their commitment towards linguistic diversity and to incorporate topics of language policies and programs in transnational curriculum inquiry. Han and Singh's paper documents the experiences of World English Speaking (WES) student-teachers in working class suburban schools in Australia. This issue is situated in the context of policy initiatives to encourage the trans-national mobility of tertiary students, an internationally significant expression of which can be found in the Bologna Process. Based on the analysis of the interview evidence, it is argued that the practicum contributes to the 'metamorphosis' of the multi-layered identities of these WES student teachers, supplementing their existing many-sided sense of self. This paper explores some of the complexities trans-national student mobility has for Australia, given its considerations of what the Bologna Process might mean for higher education policy and pedagogy. It was established that the internationalisation of higher education through policy settings such as the Bologna Process involves more than removing formal limitations on degree structures, the credit transfer system and recognition of qualifications. Han and Singh's paper is concerned with questions relating to how such policy settings may be used to raise questions about, if not solve informal limitations associated with differences in ethnic, language, educational cultures and background knowledge and to further establish how might these policy settings deal with the issues that arise when crossing frontiers especially if they are not 'readable' in the new education environment or meet imaginings of Australian standard practice? In this context, Han and Singh's paper considers how future developments in teacher education might usefully benefit from reflecting on the Bologna Process as it moves from 'out there' to find expression in, and responses through local teacher education programs 'here and there.'

Xiulan argues for the preservation of minority languages in the globalized age using the notions of identity, language, and human rights. She uses an example from the Peoples' Republic of China to highlight the need for policy initiatives in preserving minority languages in China. In this paper, she presents an overview on China's policies on minority languages, their writing systems, bilingual education, and policies that favour the use of minority languages in political, administration, educational, and legal sectors. Although there is no critical analysis regarding the benefits of minority language policies in the Peoples' Republic of China, her article draws attention to the global threat to minority languages. Xiulan recommends the need for research on the effectiveness of language policies in preserving



cultural and linguistic heritage. In short, Xiulan argued that globalisation and transnationalism represented by the global expansion of dominant cultures and languages includes the inherent threat of the erosion of minority ethnic cultures and languages, thus leading to her argument for the inevitable need for greater cultural preservation. So for Xiulan, transnationalism and globalisation could be a process of making people aware of the necessity of mutual recognition of the diversities and peculiarities of human cultures and values.

The Internet as the major example of new electronic information and communication technologies (ICTs), in fact, affects patterns of language use in many respects. On the one hand, it seems to support the trends of linguistic standardisation which accompany the more general processes of globalisation while on the other hand, the Internet may actually support the maintenance of local minority languages in situations, where access to national spheres of communication is restricted and conventional resources for storing multilingual information are scarce. Li and Tingjun's paper looks at the impact of computer-mediated communication (CMC) on the teaching/learning of English language to speakers of other languages in a global context (ESOL). One of the issues raised in this paper focuses on how the Internet has altered the use of standardised English and the English curriculum. They elaborate on how the lexical, phonetic, and syntactic standards as well as curriculum orientations of the English language are altered by computer mediated communication and highlight the need for new curriculum and pedagogical tools in the teaching/learning of English. Li and Tingjun recommend a multiliteracies curriculum framework and project-based learning as strategies for teachers of ESOL in responding to the transformations brought in by CMC and the business of English language teaching.

The papers in this special issue of *Transnational Curriculum Inquiry* offer a number of useful insights into different approaches to globalisation and education. In the main, they have been drawn from Australia and China. Central to the idea of contemporary globalisation is the changing role of the state that continues to have a determining effect on the direction of curriculum politics, policies and pedagogies. Rather than seeing globalisation in one-dimensional terms this collection of papers has shown that educators see it as both a source of threat and an object of desire. The problems of economic globalisation that educators in China and Australia struggle over reflect and give expression to the difficulties various other groups within these societies have to deal with. Some have seen globalisation as having a pernicious effect on asylum seekers and refugees, resulting in educators having to work harder with ever-shrinking resources.

This special issue of *Transnational Curriculum Inquiry* has revealed differences and similarities among educators within and across Australia and China. It demonstrates the heterogeneity of forms of global/local consciousness and action among educators, and locates these in terms of the challenges that curriculum workers face in actual lived situations. This collection of papers has explored the contradictory, conflictual and complex dynamics of curriculum change in the work of educators, by attending to actual learning experiences, as educators engage with the significant reorganisation of their lives in the name of globalisation.

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