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Book Review: Internationalising Higher Education: Critical Explorations of Pedagogy and Policy

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Ninnes, P. & Hellstén, M. (2005) *Internationalizing Higher Education: Critical Explorations of Pedagogy and Policy*. Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong. Pages: 231 Price: 32.00 USD

Reviewed by Dr. Greg Burnett, University of the South Pacific, Fiji.

Readers are not to be distracted by the Yasmine Gooneratne-esque opening of the book that has academics like those in her novels, *A Change of Skies* and *Pleasures of Conquest*, embracing a high flying exotic lifestyle crossing borders both physical and imagined as they carry out their work on the global stage. As the editors are quick to assert, beyond the 'glitz and glamour', if it even exists at all, there are other stories, far more serious in nature, of differential power and privilege as its relates mainly to Australian tertiary institutions as they market themselves across borders, setting up offshore campuses or bringing in students from outside. It is a trend that is steadily growing to the point where at present twenty percent of Australia's tertiary enrolment consists of non-Australian citizens or residents and of course the huge revenue for these institutions that goes with it.

Behind these staggering statistics are other issues around a particular politics of knowing, identity and culture and the uneven distribution of privilege for 'providers' and 'consumers', particularly for the international students as they enter into this largely unreported terrain. For as Grant Harman explains in the collection's 'literature review' article, the literature on internationalisation of higher education is extensive but with a very narrow focus, in the Australasian region at least, on marketing, the exportation of higher education and international student learning styles. It is the 'stories' to do with privilege, power and consequence that the collection of articles seeks to tell. The stories are mostly 'how' stories, how internationalisation is enacted to produce power and privilege, how it is often skewed in favour of the institution and how the host country is at times complicit. The authors in many cases are institutional 'insiders', reflecting critically upon the work of their own higher education institutions of which they are inextricably a part. Therefore the critique in each case is, by association, turned inward. This lends each critique a degree of

legitimation that might not exist where the deconstructive gaze is on the other side of a particular border, outside looking in so to speak.

The 'story telling' is of a particular type. The editors and authors have taken a deliberate critical approach in their analyses of international higher education trends and the flows of students, knowledges, policies and practices largely along an Australian/Asian axis. Theirs is an approach that seeks to make the familiar strange, or in the words of the editors to explore the 'gaps and silences', 'to address the ambiguities, tensions, unevenness and contradictions' that surround the internationalisation of higher education in the Australasian region. A good example of this is Ranjani Naidoo and Ian Jamieson's article which makes strange the increasingly familiar 'virtual learning' from the point of view of 'academic capitalism' and 'commodification'. They argue that the packaging of higher education in electronic form, complete with un-researched pedagogic outcomes for students, thus enables universities to 'sell' their programmes in the international marketplace.

Readers need to be aware of the book's 'post' flavour. This is no simple straightforward descriptive reading of the internationalisation trend. Perhaps the best example of this is Parlo Singh and Catherine Doherty's interrogation of the ways Australia and Australia-ness are constructed through actual higher education delivery to international students. The authors examine the ways in which tutorial preparation based on simplistic and reductive notions of cultural pedagogies of difference for international students at one university creates essentialised Western and non-western identities and cultures that are potentially disempowering for international students.

Such a critical view of higher education needs to be careful in the way its own discourse works to construct the subjectivities of the major players in international education. One reads the collection of articles with one eye always on the ways international students themselves are constructed through the texts that seek to deconstruct and critique governments and of course higher education providers in the region. Most essays allow a degree of agency on the part of students as they enroll and negotiate study programmes. Michael Singh's discussion of the 'enabling' potential of the international education experience for students is one example of recognising such agency. Here students as 'ethnographic fieldworkers' are busy negotiating, navigating and using their higher education experience in one Australian university for their own strategic purposes. What is perhaps more important is the

unrecognised potential of these students in a 'contact zone' to speak about Anglo-Australian subjectivities as they see them and the benefits for Australian higher education providers, or at least those who have the ears to hear their voices. This is important as critical readings of dominant educational practices can either intentionally or unintentionally construct such subjects' positions in terms of victim, passivity or compliance, robbed of all agency in the enterprise that is higher education provision across national borders.

Similarly internationalisation as subject itself is not depicted in an entirely negative light. The book is also notable for the balanced view taken on internationalisation and globalisation trends. The two are not simply demonised through a ruthless deconstruction of both. Though different authors take different approaches, collectively both internationalisation and globalisation are depicted in the book not only as oppressive, partial and interested in terms of the students' study experience but also as potentially generative and opportunistic. Neither are both to be wholly and simplistically embraced or rejected. The essays collectively open up the fields to all potential players, together governments, institutions and students, both national 'insiders' and international 'outsiders'.

Deconstructive writing generally is about seeking to clear a discursive space and to the consternation of some readers that's the end of the story. Alternative imagining of, talking about and enacting, in this case higher education across national borders, is often left for others to do. The essays in this collection, to varying degrees at least, attempt to erect something new on the cleared site. An example is Peter Ninnes' critical discourse analysis of some Australian universities' involvement in the *Virtual Colombo Plan*, a curious example of Australian universities crossing borders for aid rather than trade. Ninnes concludes his analysis with a discussion of ways the plan might be enacted without a differential power relationship that sees Australia as 'utopia' and 'saviour' and other nations in terms of lack.

The essays do have a rather one way emphasis, that is, student flow from Asia into Australia's domestic institutions, either as students enrolled on the main domestic campus or through an offshore campus. The exception is Rui Yang's case study of a major university in China. Here Yang points out the similarities at least in terms of the increasingly managerialist discourse if not the mobilities of students across Chinese borders to that university. The essays are also collectively more Asia than Pacific. The exception here is Katarina

Tuinamuana's insightful analysis of the less than critical uptake of managerialist policy by one Fijian tertiary education provider. In regard to this there is little else that is Pacific in the collection.

Perhaps a greater emphasis could have been made by the editors concerning the smaller higher education providers of the region and the impacts they feel through the various discourses of internationalisation that often work to the advantages of the bigger players around the Pacific rim. This reviewer works in teacher training within the University of the South Pacific, a minor player compared to many institutions on the Asia-Australia-New Zealand rim but nevertheless one that makes enormous social, cultural, environmental and political contributions within the Pacific region. This institution competes with higher education providers around the rim in a very uneven open education market at times skewed all the more by rim governments who sponsor Pacific students to study at their own institutions and who link educational consultancies with study packages in their own universities. Like many smaller regional institutions the University of the South Pacific struggles to compete with the glossily presented images of Australian universities, unashamedly linked to similarly presented glossy Australian lifestyles that are marketed almost twenty four hours a day through Australia's free to air ABC television service *ABC Asia Pacific*. Analyses of internationalisation in tertiary education provision could do well to examine the effects on smaller 'local' universities throughout the Asia Pacific region. Perhaps this collection of essays might be the prompt for such analyses.

The collection of ten essays, plus introduction, will be of interest not only to those seeking analyses of internationalisation of higher education in the Australasian region and elsewhere in the world but those with interests in globalisation and its uneven social, economic and cultural impacts. Those with interests in comparative education and the recent growth of post-foundational voices in that field and also those with interests in applications of post-foundational theoretical perspectives to the field of education in general will find much value in the collection.

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