

Intercultural Literacy and the International School

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Tasmania

December 2004

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Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to my father, who taught me the base values and competencies of intercultural literacy.

I would like to acknowledge and thank those who provided support and assistance in the development of this thesis:

- Kaltim Prima Coal (KPC) for providing access to the site, personnel and documents, welcoming me into the community, providing accommodation and local transportation, and providing assistance with translation
- Dr David Klinger and Conzinc Riotinto of Australia (CRA) for assistance with travel costs
- Language Australia, for assistance with travel costs
- The Department of Education, Culture and Community Development (DECCD), Tasmania, for providing access to the school
- Somchai Sakulthap for friendship, advice and assistance with accommodation in Thailand
- Ibu Ruly for assistance with transcriptions and translation in Jakarta
- Sue Clayton for photographs
- MAJ. Juri Karlis Linins, Dr Hamad Hasan (*IKIP Bandung*) and others who read and commented on drafts of the thesis

I would also especially like to acknowledge and thank those who collaborated in the research:

- Drs Sopantini and Drs Enny Asmororini for voluntary assistance with data collection and translation, and for lengthy discussions on the interpretation of cultural meanings
- Supervisors, past and present, especially Dr John Braithwaite, Dr Joan Abbott-Chapman and Dr Carmel Desmarchelier from the University of Tasmania
- Members of the Tanjung Bara Reference Group including principals, staff and parents of the Tanjung Bara International School
- Elizabeth Traumans and Louise Cunningham for assistance conducting interviews
- Richard Pearce, Anne McKillop-Ostrom and others researching culture learning in international schools, who engaged in dialogue, provided feedback and shared ideas

And, finally, to all those who participated in the study in Tanjung Bara and other schools visited in South East Asia: Thank you for welcoming me into your schools, your communities, your homes and your lives. Thank you for so generously sharing your time and your experiences.

Abstract

In this study a new developmental model describing the nature of intercultural literacy and how it is learnt is proposed and trialled. Intercultural literacy is defined as the understandings, attitudes, competencies and identities which enable effective participation in a cross-cultural setting. As such it is presented as a crucial literacy for the globalised world of the twenty-first century.

The Multidimensional Model for the Development of Intercultural Literacy is developed on the basis of theory from social psychology and international education, is checked for validity against reference groups in the field – practitioners in international schools in Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand - and is modified in the light of inputs received.

The model is then trialled in the context of a case study of the Tanjung Bara International School and its community in East Kalimantan, Indonesia. The case study seeks to map the school and community in terms of intercultural literacy, evaluate the school's intercultural literacy curriculum and explore the relationship between the community and school in relation to intercultural literacy learning. The broad aim is to determine the extent to which the proposed model is useful in helping to describe the case and to answer the questions posed by the case study.

The case study concludes that the school and its community is predominately at a monocultural or 'distancing' level with a smaller group moving into the more positive learning stage characteristic of the cross-cultural level in the model. The community is found to have been deeply divided on cultural lines between the Indonesian and the largely Australian expatriate communities. The international school contributed to this divide through reinforcing the status of expatriates as privileged and separate. The objectives of the curriculum and non-core school programs to facilitate intercultural literacy were found to have been seriously hampered by this cultural divide, among other factors. The school was not found to have played a significant role in facilitating intercultural literacy learning in the broader community.

The thesis concludes that the proposed Multidimensional Model for the Development of Intercultural Literacy is useful in this case study and is potentially useful in a wide range of contexts, particularly in international schools and their communities. It provides a tool which may assist educators in understanding intercultural literacy and facilitate the development of policy and practice including curriculum, extra-curricular programs and assessment.

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Glossary of Terms

acculturation	The process of learning a second or non-primary culture. Cultural change that it is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. (Berry, Trimble and Olmedo 1986: 292)
<i>angklung</i>	Traditional baboo musical instruments from West Java
Anglo-American	An ethnic and cultural background originating historically from Britain or America, including former British colonies with a dominant ‘Anglo’ culture, such as Australia and New Zealand.
Anglo-Australian	An Australian with an ethnic and cultural background originating historically from Britain.
attribution	An individual’s attempt to explain other’s behaviour through reference to traits, disposition or situational factors
<i>Bahasa Indonesia</i>	Indonesian Language – the national language of Indonesia
<i>Batak</i>	Ethnic group from North Sumatra
<i>batik</i>	Traditional Indonesian technique for dying fabric with wax releif
<i>Batu Putih</i>	‘White Rock’, senior KPC housing area in Tanjung Bara
bicultural	Individuals, families or other contexts in which two parallel, equal-status cultures co-exist
<i>Bontang</i>	City to the south of Sangatta on the east coast of Kalimantan
BP	British Petroleum
<i>Bugis</i>	Ethnic group from Sulawasi
<i>bule</i>	From the term ‘ <i>kerbau bule</i> ’, a white-skinned buffalo, a mildly derogatory term for a ‘white’ person
CRA	Conzinc Riotinto of Australia, the Australian parent company of KPC.
cross-cultural	Any situation, relationship or event which involves more than one cultural group, or individuals representing more than one cultural group
culture	Culture is constructed, it defines groups within and between societies, it is fluid and changing, and it is learned. It is ‘...the shared way of life of a group of people.’ (Berry, Poortinga, Segall and Dasen 1992: 167)

<i>Dani</i>	Ethnic group from West Papua (formerly, Irian Jaya)
DEA	Department of Education and the Arts (Tasmania) subsequently renamed Department of Education, Culture and Community Development (DECCD)
enculturation	The process of learning one's primary culture, the culture '...in which one develops' (Berry, Trimble and Olmedo 1986: 291).
expatriate	A person who has left their country of birth or official residence to take up residence in a foreign country. 'The majority of expatriates and their families come from "first world" countries and are stationed abroad on assignment for the companies that employ them' (Meldenhall and Wiley 1994: 606).
<i>IKIP</i>	<i>Institut Keguruan Ilmu Pendidikan</i> or Teacher Training Institute
intercultural	Any situation, relationship or event which involves more than one cultural group, or individuals representing more than one cultural group
international education	Education for participation in an international world
international school	A school self-defined as 'international' which offers an international or foreign education to expatriate and sometimes local students
Islamist	Relating to political and religious movements based on philosophies of fundamentalist, puritanical Islamic revival. Islamists believe that all problems faced by Muslim societies can be solved only by adhering to the strict tenets of Islam. (Word IQ Internet Dictionary 2004)
<i>jam karet</i>	Literally 'rubber time', an expression to denote flexibility in keeping schedules and time commitments
<i>Javanese</i>	Of the ethnic group from Java
<i>kasti</i>	Traditional Indonesian sport similar to baseball and played with a curved bat
KPC	'Kaltim Prima Coal' (' <i>Kaltim</i> ' is an abbreviated form of <i>Kalimantan Timur</i> , East Kalimantan, the name of the province.)
LOTE	Languages Other Than English
<i>mandi</i>	Indonesian-style bath using a large basin and dipper
<i>Minahasan</i>	Of the <i>Minahasa</i> ethnic group from North Sulawesi

<i>Pancasila</i>	Official State ideology of Indonesia
<i>Sangatta</i>	Local village in East Kalimantan (a local term with unclear meaning). Used to refer to the KPC mine-site area.
<i>Sangatta Baru</i>	New Sangatta, the company town for Indonesian employees
<i>Sangatta Lama</i>	Old Sangatta, the original village area
<i>Sasak</i>	Of the predominate ethnic group from Lombok
SOSE	Studies of Society and the Environment
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
<i>Suarga Bara</i>	‘Fire Heaven’, new name for <i>Sangatta Baru</i>
<i>Sundanese</i>	Of the <i>Sunda</i> ethnic group from West Java
<i>Tanjung Bara</i>	‘Coal Point’, the senior camp for KPC and contractors
<i>Teluk Lingga</i>	<i>Lingga</i> Bay (<i>Lingga</i> is a poetic term from the Sanscrit referring to a sacred female symbol)
transcultural	Individuals or contexts in which more than two cultures co-exist and an independent, mutual ‘third culture’ exists. A conceptual move beyond the confines of one or two cultures and towards a global or transnational context
<i>Yogyanese</i>	From the Yogyakarta area in Central Java
YPPSB	<i>Yayasan Prima Pendidikan Sangatta Baru</i> – or, literally, ‘Prima Education Foundation, Sangatta Baru’