

Global Teachers, Australian Perspectives

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Goodbye Mr Chips, Hello Ms Banerjee

 Springer

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Foreword

When I first faced a class in another country – Canada – I remember being very nervous about what the students would think of me, and uncertain about how I could speak with them. I had been teaching for 17 years at the time, so I was fairly practised at the trade, but this was new territory in every way. I soon learned one important lesson, that jokes don't migrate as easily as people do. Teachers' humour is very indexical! I gradually learned another and more hopeful lesson, that my different knowledge and style of thinking could be assets for the students, if we had the time and goodwill to make them so.

My teaching career has been in universities, not schools, but my experiences, then and in a later migration, have some overlap with the stories of travel and settlement documented in this book. It is a cliché to say our world is global, and much of the media and corporate talk about 'globalization' is, socially speaking, quite naive. Our world is also massively unequal, and those inequalities are constantly exploited for economic and political advantage. But new possibilities for movement and exchange are also created. The growing global mobility of school teachers is an important reality for our thinking about education.

This book challenges us to think in ways that educators usually don't. We are all familiar with ideas of multicultural education, and we mostly subscribe to a vague idea of international cooperation. These ideas are qualified by the fears whipped up by right-wing ideologues of 'border protection' and 'war on terror'. They are hardly soothed by businessmen's invocation of the 'global market' – since global market forces have become a major source of social anxiety. It's important then, as in so many issues, to pay attention to the real experience at the grass roots. We need to find out what actually happens in the lives of the people who are weaving the fabric of global society.

That is exactly what this book does. We hear the voices of teachers who have made the long trips and negotiated the informal barriers and the official barbed wire. We are introduced to the dilemmas of recognition, both formal recognition of qualifications and informal recognition of skills and experience. We see the interplay of race, gender, nationality, even class, not as abstract intersections but as dynamics through time, through life stories.

We learn, perhaps with a shock, that the meaning of being a teacher, the professional identity of teachers, cannot be taken for granted. This varies from place to place and is at stake in migration. We learn that the large-scale making of an internationalized labour force is an intensely human process. It is sometimes buoyant and successful, sometimes shattering in its consequences.

This book invites us to think afresh about the industrial consequences of labour migration in education. Those consequences include the working conditions of migrant teachers, the uses made of their skills and knowledge by schools and systems, and the questions of recognition and certification. On the evidence of this book, Australian school systems are not handling these issues well. With the ascendancy of neoliberal politicians and policymakers, introducing more intrusive testing systems and accreditation regimes, it is not likely that this will change soon.

A really important feature of this book is that the authors invite us to think *educationally* about the migration of teachers. This is not only about teachers' educational needs – something Australian education has mostly forgotten (in-service programmes were the first to go when the public sector funding squeeze came on). It's also about the educational resource that internationally mobile teachers represent for the school system generally and the children in their classes specifically.

Such teachers can be a tremendous resource in curriculum development (to the extent systems recognize teachers as participants in making curriculum, again something that neoliberal policymakers seem to hate). They can be a strategic resource in working with migrant children and multicultural school communities. Migrant teachers' own continuing overseas networks, one of the most interesting points documented in this book, can also be an educational asset for the school.

Finally, the book encourages us to abandon the 'cultural cringe', the habit of looking only to Europe and the United States for ideas and authority. The authors encourage us to take a much more global view of educational and social thought. There is, at present, an international movement that criticizes Eurocentrism in educational thought, the humanities and social science. This book not only joins that movement, it also shows a practical basis beyond the academic world, in the experience of growing numbers of teachers, for a more globally inclusive and more democratic view of education.

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Raewyn Connell

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Abbreviations

AEU	Australian Education Union
AEUSA	Australian Education Union, South Australia
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DEST	Department of Education, Science, and Training
DIAC	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
DIMIA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
ET	Emigrant Teacher
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ISLPR	International Second Language Proficiency Ratings
IT	Immigrant Teacher
LOTE	Language other than English
NESB	Non-English-speaking backgrounds
NSW	New South Wales
NSWDET	New South Wales Department of Education and Training
NSWTF	New South Wales Teachers Federation
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OTT	Overseas Trained Teacher
PEAT	Professional English Assessment for Teachers
RSMS	Regional Sponsorship Migration Scheme
SA	South Australia
SADECS	South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TRT	Temporary Relieving Teacher
WA	Western Australia
WACOT	Western Australian College of Teaching
WADoE	Western Australian Department of Education
WADTWD	Western Australian Department of Training and Workforce Development
UTS	University of Technology, Sydney
UWS	University of Western Sydney