

Saying Goodbye: The Cultural Tradition of Graduation and the International Student's Response.

Presented by Lorraine Macmaster¹ and Annalise Tindal²

1 PIBT ECU Churchlands Campus, Pearson Street, Churchlands WA www.pibt.wa.edu.au (lorraine@pibt.wa.edu.au)

2 Curtin International College, GPO Box U1987 Perth, Western Australia 6845 www.cic.wa.edu.au (atindal@cic.wa.edu.au)

Abstract:

Graduation celebrates the completion or the commencement of an academic career.

It has been considered a rite of passage in which we emphasize confronting new responsibilities, opportunities and threats and adjusting to the nostalgia of leaving a familiar scene..

At PIBT and CIC, International students can fast track to their 2nd year of University by completing their Diploma. As Student Advisors at these Colleges we are particularly involved with the welcome and the farewell process. We see our students across a bridge.

This paper will discuss the traditions we have put into place at our respective Colleges concerning Graduation. We will consider how International students react to our traditions and how they have created some of their own for us to adopt. We will also contemplate how our students can establish solidarity and readjust to changes when many of them are still in the process of adjusting.

Key Words:

Graduation, Tradition, Rewards and Achievement, Adjustment, Cohesion, Reverse Culture Shock

Introduction:

Culture is the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behaviour that depends upon man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations (Merriam-Webster's online dictionary). A definition of tradition reads in part: The unwritten or oral delivery of information, opinions, doctrines, practices, rites and customs... (Webster's 1913 Dictionary). Another definition reads: A specific practice of long standing (Wordnet Dictionary). The tradition of graduation—a rite of passage— entails different procedures and customs. Graduation could be called a rite of passage, but what does that mean to the International Student in Australia?

Rites of passage are a category of rituals that mark the passage of a person through the lifecycle, from one stage to another over time, from one role or social position to another, integrating the human and cultural experiences with biological destiny: birth, reproduction and death. (Encyclopaedia of Religion)

Rites of passage are a ritual or ceremony that marks one stage of a person's life to another. Arnold van Gennep coined the phrase 'rite of passage' in 1909. He believed that passage rituals had three steps:

1. Separation from society
2. Transition or the liminal stage
3. Return to Society in the new status.

Separation is the first stage in a rite of passage: loss of identity. This stage ruptures ties to self, family, community. Often involves alienation or movement across boundaries. Transition is the second stage in rite of passage, the 'in-between' time in which the participant has lost his old identity but has not been fully incorporated into the community with a new identity. Incorporation or return to society with a new identity. The person may wear ritual clothes, may receive emblems of new status and the ritual often involves individuals, immediate family and the larger community.

Rites of passage have certain functions:

1. Dramatise facing new responsibilities, opportunities and dangers
2. They readjust the participant (and all in their social circle) to these changes
3. They establish solidarity and sacredness of common values (or rituals?).

Each culture either creates its own rite of passage or acquires one being handed down (tradition) or both and will form a new ritual based on the current moment. Every country has a culture and almost every culture has its own rites of passage. In Chinese farming villages a difficult 6th grade test determines whether a child continues beyond elementary school or stops studying to work. Marriage is an important step in the Chinese traditional lifeline and there are elaborate celebrations involved. At weddings or Chinese New Year, the Chinese give *Hong Bao* (red packets filled with money), which symbolize luck and wealth. Traditionally, red packets are handed out to the younger generation by their parents, grand parents, relatives, and even close neighbors and friends or employers. Usually the one that does the giving is older or married and considered to be a responsible adult. The older the children are, the more money they will get. It's similar to the tradition of getting an allowance in American culture- the older the child, the more responsibilities they have, the more money they receive.

In the book *Roots*, Alex Haley writes much about the cultural history of Africa. He includes the effect of the different economic roles, the sexual roles of people, the place of women in the culture, and their religion, including the rites of passage. Haley describes how Kunta Kinte distinguishes himself in manhood training rituals. *Roots* still has the ability to open one's eyes for many reasons. There are descriptions of the Mandinka boys of West Africa being circumcised at age ten. Circumcision is practiced in most Muslim cultures and is considered a rite of passage that represents changing from a boy to a man. In Turkey it is performed about age seven. Actually, seven years is an important age in the Muslim tradition as it is the age when the child is allowed to go to the religious school or '*masjid*' if they have shown respect in school and understood ritual cleanliness.

Other cultures have less severe rights of passage, and in America there are many. At sixteen American teenagers can get a driver's license and at eighteen they are legally free from parents and independent so they can vote, smoke cigarettes, get married, join the army, and live on their own. This is the time they graduate from high school and are considered to be adults. Graduation is considered is a rite of passage with a cap and gown, music and speeches. At 21 they can gamble, buy and drink liquor, and most young Americans usually live away from their parents. Interestingly, the transition for the female in American culture and Mexican culture is marked by celebrations. American girls enjoy celebrating their 'Sweet Sixteen', whereas Mexicans celebrate *Quinceanera* or the '*fiesta da quince anos*' which is the rite of passage for fifteen year old females indicating their transition to adulthood.

Most students coming to study in Australia have an average idea about our culture. They probably realise that when they complete their certificate or diploma and eventually their degree they have completed what we consider to be a rite of passage. It might be fair to assume that they most probably expect a celebration to note their achievements.

When we think of rites of passage we are reminded of the lyrics in 'The Circle Game' by Joni Mitchell: "And the seasons, they go round and round, the painted ponies go up and down. We're captive on the Carousel of Time. We can't return, we can only look behind from where we came and go round and round and round in the circle game."

Who are we?

The graduation ceremony we will discuss is a farewell to the Colleges and to students themselves. Although both Colleges have a big contingent of international students, there is only one ceremony (in each college), which involves students from many countries. At Perth Institute of Business and Technology (PIBT), we have students from Australia, Africa, Indonesia, China, Bangladesh, India, Japan, Slovak Republic and once, even a student from Canada. At Curtin International College (CIC) our students are predominantly from South East Asia but we also have students from Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

CIC and PIBT are sister colleges located in Perth. We are both affiliated with universities; CIC with Curtin and PIBT with Edith Cowan University. CIC has approximately 900 students and PIBT has approximately 750.

Both Colleges have Certificate Programs (the equivalent of grade 12) and Diplomas. The Diplomas are equivalent to the first year of a degree in the host university. This means that both Colleges receive students who are fresh from their home country and some who have never been away from home. It also means that

when our students leave us- once they have graduated with their diploma- they still have quite an important part of their academic career commencing, namely their time at University.

The Graduation Ceremony

It is fairly obvious that late childhood to early adulthood is a significant time in most every culture. In Australian culture, the Graduation Ceremony is a significant rite of passage as expressed in the following excerpt from a Graduation speech delivered at the Australian National University Graduation, Llewellyn Hall, Canberra School of Music by Fay Gale AO, the President of the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee, on 27 September 1996:

“Graduation ceremonies are one of the most colourful and significant traditions of universities. They are exciting occasions and today is very special for all new graduates, and a proud day for parents, relatives, and friends. It is the result of several years of hard work. Today is the time to reflect on your achievements and what you have gained from your time at university. But more importantly, for you, this is a time to look to the future. Yours is, indeed a very promising future as you are now prepared to enter the 21st century equipped to become intellectual, social and political leader for the next millennium.”

The graduation ceremony dates back to the 12th century. When we think of graduation, in our culture, images spring to mind of gowns, hoods, caps and certain rituals, such as the speech to the graduates by a high ranking person, the speech by one of the students, the valedictorian.

Graduation speeches are always a significant part of any graduation ceremony. The Guest Speaker is usually a person of some significance who students look up to and respect. At both PIBT and CIC we have invited University Vice Chancellors, Unit Coordinators, Lecturers and Executive Directors of the Colleges to speak. The Valediction, however, is usually more readily accepted. Valedictorians at our Colleges are chosen based on their academic success and ability. These students give a parting address pertaining to leave taking. We ask them to chat about their experience at the College. We ask them to tell their story. The valedictorian is chosen by staff, not necessarily the highest achiever (although often it turns out to be) but someone who staff believes have been ‘good’ students. ‘Good’ being defined as attentive, tries hard, has a rapport with other students and has an engaging personality.

Dress is a form of non-verbal communication; the dress or ‘cap and gown’ worn at graduation ceremonies is telling. Actually, we found that ceremonial dress for graduation is an immense subject. When Universities first began forming in the 12th and 13th centuries most scholars wore clerical robes. By the time of Henry VIII, Oxford and Cambridge began using a standard form of academic dress and at present we find that there are number of different gowns and styles to take into account. The shape and size of hood design and the sleeve design of the gown may show the degree the student pursued. Colours worn, whether shown on the lining of the gown or a hood, a sash or a tassel may tell which University gave the degree or, in most cases, signify the field of study.

At CIC, gowns are pre-ordered through Curtin University’s Gown Office. Students completing their Diploma wear a simple black gown. At PIBT, a number of gowns have been specially ordered from overseas for use by graduating Certificate and Diploma students. All students wear black gowns with a brightly coloured sash in the colours of PIBT (yellow and blue). In our experience, the majority of students are especially excited about collecting their gown and wearing it properly. It’s humbling to see their enthusiasm. We have even had students and their families come to our ceremonies in their national dress or dress that signifies something to them. Many of our Malaysian students wear a formal sari and they simply shine with pride while collecting their Diploma. Of course, occasionally international students show up without a gown and are somewhat shocked that they cannot participate in the ceremony.

Both the PIBT and CIC ceremonies are held in a large lecture theatre on the University campus (Edith Cowan, Churchlands campus or Curtin University Bentley campus respectively). The ceremonies generally attract approximately 50 to 60 graduating students. Most of the students who attend graduation are from overseas. Many of their families come to Perth to be at the graduation and, of course, many of their friends come to the ceremony and the PIBT afternoon tea or the CIC evening of food and drink.

Often, we might ask what these students are coming to the ceremony for, but we usually arrive at the same conclusion: they want to celebrate the joy of their achievements with us and with family and friends. It's that simple. At both Colleges we provide the ceremony, arrange for speakers and print out programs and the much anticipated diplomas and awards. The program we provide includes the names of all graduating students who will attend printed on the program as well as the schedule of events. Also printed are the names of students who have achieved the highest mark in each of the disciplines on the program. At PIBT they are given a congratulatory letter and a cheque for a small amount (\$100). At CIC they are given a Certificate of Achievement and a Book Voucher in the amount of \$100.

At CIC we no longer have graduation ceremonies for Certificate students. We found that the vast majority of students who attended were Diploma students and that most Certificate graduates complained about having to pay for a gown to wear when they had not yet finished their studies with us. These days, Certificate Graduates simply collect their award from the CIC main office on a specified date and Diploma students have the ceremony and celebrations to themselves. It is truly a send-off for them.

PIBT students receive their awards, either a Certificate or a Diploma in order of the type of award and alphabetized in that area. They are allocated seats in the order in which they will receive the award, with each student's name on a seat. In the past the student took the nametag, went to the front and gave it to the MC who would then read their name out. The person assisting would hand the award to the dignitary who would hand the award to the student, shake hands and their picture would be taken. At one time, we sorted the awards in that order and students would come up for the award when their name was called, but we had a great deal of trouble with students changing seats to sit with their friends. It was difficult to find the award that went with the name and, in some cases students were given the wrong award. It has been changed now to improve the organisation of the ceremony. The award as well as the nametag is now placed on the seat where the student is to sit. The student takes the award, plus the nametag to the front when he/she is shepherded by the Student Advisor and told to go to the front. This means that each student gets the proper award.

Indeed, it takes a great deal of organisation to get a graduation ceremony to run smoothly. It has been said that marriage, moving and death are three most stressful events in a person's life. As Student Advisors in charge of Graduation Ceremonies at our Colleges, we would like to add organising graduation to the list! Of course, we usually follow the same formula, which makes life easier. The ceremony begins with the dignitary giving a speech to the audience. The dignitary is usually an academic from the University who tries to inspire the students to continue with their education, preferably at Edith Cowan or Curtin. The award presentation is then begun with the dignitary and each student having a picture taken. At the conclusion of the award presentation, the special awards are given. Now is the time the valedictorian says good-bye to PIBT/CIC on behalf of all the students. We have included a PIBT valedictorian speech.

After the ceremony there is much rejoicing as graduates and their guests enjoy the Halal food and refreshments. At CIC most graduates can't seem to stop taking pictures in front of the international flags decorating the front of the lecture theatre. The flags were an idea we had at the very beginning, when CIC had its second graduation ceremony in early 2001. The number of students at the College was growing and we wanted to make their eventual graduation ceremony memorable.

We learnt a great deal in those first few semesters as we ordered various flags of the world. For instance, red is the most popular colour of flags of the world, followed by white and then blue. Most importantly, staff at the College had a chance to know what the flag of a certain country looked like. It dawned on us that we could have continued to educate students from all over the world and never know what the flag of their country looked like. The idea seemed shameful and we investigated further. We wondered what the Arabic writing said on the flags of Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and others. We learned from a Flags of the World website (<http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/faq3.html#usa>) that "calligraphy is an important art form in many Islamic countries, and some of them literally spell out their faith in Islam on their flag. Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan both bear the *shahada*, the affirmation of the Muslim faith: "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammad is His prophet." Another common phrase is *Allah akbar*, or "Allah is great," which is written in between the stars of the Iraqi flag, and in between the stripes on the Iranian flag 22 times, to commemorate the 22nd day of the month when the Islamic Revolution took place."

Students react when they see their flag hanging up at the graduation ceremony. After the ceremony, when we serve them refreshments they can't seem to get enough photos with friends, family and staff in front of the flag of their country or the Australian flag. They are full of pride and it's exceptionally rewarding to witness. A few semesters ago, we had our first students from Kenya graduating and we ordered the Kenyan flag. The manufacturer had missed out the colour green from the bottom of the flag and filled it in with black cloth instead. Kenyan students approached us at the ceremony to tell us about the error and there were even a few emails waiting for us the next day. These students were so polite. It was important for them to correct our error in the most courteous way possible.

Since we do not have caps as a part of the dress for our ceremonies, students cannot follow the tradition of tossing their graduation hats into the air in celebration when the ceremony is over. Reflecting on this had us review some other traditions. In Arizona, graduates dress up in their graduation attire and at 6 am they rush inside a restaurant or bar, where they 'get hammered' before their ceremony. In Mountain Pointe, there is a tradition of leaving the 'girl power' car to a graduate. Another tradition involves jumping into a huge fountain after the ceremony.

Controversy surrounds some graduation ceremonies, such as the tradition of throwing, not hats but tortillas in the air (Mexicans consider it offensive). In another disturbing trend in the United States, 'Voluntary Ethnic Segregated Graduation' ceremonies are in vogue at some universities. For example, Stanford University USA has different ceremonies (called not graduation but commencement) such as:

- Chicano/Latino Graduation Ceremony
- Catholic Graduation Mass & Dinner
- Asian American Graduation Dinner
- Native American Graduation Dinner
- African American Graduation Program

The controversy over this stems from disagreement with separate ceremonies for separate ethnic groups, which is against the USA strategy to be a melting pot, to the fact that very few students attend the ethnic ceremonies.

Both PIBT and CIC have graduation ceremonies that include all nationalities and all disciplines. When the valedictorian makes his/her speech saying goodbye, it is as one voice. International and local students feel a sense of camaraderie in that they have all reached an important milestone at the same time.

Expectations

Upon Arrival

Chudi Nsofor discusses student experiences in home countries, experiences while studying in Australia and experiences on return to their home countries in the paper 'Adjustment to Life and Study in Australia: A Student's Perspective'. Nsofor suggests that most students leave their home countries with a vague idea about what to expect in Australia and therefore detailed information about airport reception, academic courses, accommodation, clothing requirements and the social environment in Australia must be provided by the institution.

At PIBT and CIC, as with most education institutions in Australia, a detailed pre-departure guide is sent to prospective students. Still, we find that students may have accepted the wrong course or they may even discover that there are insufficient finances to support the entire course period. As Student Advisors we hope to see these students through any difficulties they may encounter.

Upon arrival, students expect to be met at the airport and taken to a hotel or hostel. This is true of most international students. If, as sometimes happens, communication breaks down or the student is forced to take a different flight, no one is there to meet them. If a student has been informed where they are going to stay for the first few nights, a taxi would be the answer.

The next morning is very important as the student is floundering in a new country and possibly/probably experiencing culture shock. When a person/student leaves a familiar home where they know how to read hundreds of signs, how to respond to subtle cues and behave according to implicit rules, the student becomes quite stressed when faced with the task of being plunged into a situation where everything is different and when faced with the task of learning new signs and cues. If English is the student's second language, it may be difficult to understand what people are saying and, even worse, getting people to understand what is being said to them. The telephone system is not known; the transportation system is not what they are accustomed to, particularly when the destination is unknown.

One student, new to Perth, took a bus from her overnight hotel room to get to the campus, did not know where to get off and went around in circles before getting off back at the hotel where she was staying. The disorientation, not only with transport but also with what people are thinking and how to gauge new values can cause severe stress, called culture shock. It is very important that the new student finds friends and becomes a part of the College in the shortest possible time.

At PIBT, there is a Student Support Program whereby every new student is assigned (in a group of no more than 10 students) a 'Student Leader' who takes the students for lunch, provides a tour of the campus, stays with the students the next day, takes the students on a tour of the downtown area and assembles with the students at the end of week two for a barbeque. The Student Leader acts as a mentor for each new student. We are trying to alleviate the loneliness and culture shock new students, especially from overseas, are experiencing. CIC has just started a similar Mentoring Program.

Upon arrival at the Colleges, new students undergo an Orientation process we have prearranged. With the introduction of a new mentoring system at both Colleges, we hope that new students can assimilate quickly to life and study in Australia. Social and academic adjustment must take place, along with overcoming language problems, meeting financial requirements as well as meeting expectations of the home country/family. It is not surprising that culture shock can occur not only in the first few days of arrival, but also the first few weeks or months after arrival.

Nsofor mentions that "culture shock is a phenomenon which manifests itself in different phases." Some international students cannot triumph over this shock simply or swiftly. On the whole, there is a need to identify the full range of language problems overseas students face, to know that they must adapt to the Australian system of education, to be sensitive to the fact that they face the challenge of social adjustment, that there can be a magnitude of financial worries for them, and that they often face high expectations from their family back home, which can be quite intimidating.

Upon Leaving

Just as a person/student entering a new country for the first time, experiences culture shock, a student going home after living for a long time in another country, may experience many of the same feelings. The student has built up ways of coping and adapting to the new country so well, they may well experience 'reverse culture shock'.

This can be even more distressing than culture shock of leaving home and going to a new country. Feelings of disorientation may be expected going to a new country but is not expected 'going home'. The feeling of euphoria soon changes to that of depression when the student feels 'foreign' in his own home. The experience of being in a new country, conquering all the homesickness, frustration, uncertainty, and anxiety is a broadening process and the student who comes home may not be the same person who left home three or four years ago.

Friends and family at home may have also changed. It may be hard to relate to people at home. This may make the returning student feel confused and dissatisfied with those at home. The returning student may experience a sense of loss, knowing things will never be the same as they were when he/she left to study.

On a more personal note (from the PIBT Student Advisor) we immigrated to Australia in 1973. 'We' consists of my husband Allan, one son (5 years of age at the time) and me. One year later we had to go back to Canada due to family complications. We prepared for the reunion with family and friends with pictures of Perth and its parks, we recorded music from the radio with the announcer's accents introducing the songs

and bought souvenirs to take back. Sure enough, we had ‘celebrity’ status for a very short time (about one day) and could not believe that family and friends were not even slightly interested in our stories and tapes and pictures. Meanwhile, the three of us lapsed into a depression that stayed with us for a long time. All we talked about was when we could get back. It took us six years.

Perhaps, Thomas Wolfe was right–‘You Can’t Go Home Again’.

Growing up around the world (for the CIC Student Advisor) meant home was always difficult to find in the first place. For me, there is so much truth in the expression ‘home is where the heart is’. Home has always been wherever my family lived. There have been many homes in many countries over the years and I have always returned to find them altered. When returning to America I am changed and so is America. When visiting Singapore my ‘Singlish’ is rusty, I am not as I once was and the island is always so different. Time changes people, but so do new places.

When we say goodbye to our students they may go home or they may continue on to University, whether it be Curtin University or Edith Cowan University. They could still be in the process of adjustment and we must take this into account and ensure that the International Offices at our Universities are prepared to take in students who have been in Australia but that are not fully adjusted. We must also prepare the students so that they know they will undergo another process of adjustment. University life is similar but not the same as College life. Students who have continued onto University still return to tell us this time and again.

For those students who decide to return home with their completed Certificate or Diploma they may go through reverse adjustment. Minor language problems due to accents and mannerisms picked up while here in Australia is one area of readjustment, but there is also social, work and/or academic readjustment to consider. We need to incorporate these issues into our handbooks or information packs or address them in a session before final departure from the College.

Results

There are varied reactions to celebrating achievement. Some international students are extremely eager to learn the dates of their graduation ceremony and any information about it, whereas others have to be cajoled just to come in and pick up their Diploma! Those students who show up to their graduation ceremony without a gown are perhaps not aware of the importance we connect to ceremony and the formal dress required. For those that do come along, we find that collecting their award is extremely motivating for them. They are eager to take that next step and satisfied with what they have achieved.

At CIC we have considered the numbers of students of various nationalities in attendance at the last five graduation ceremonies compared with those that actually graduated. We found that students from Kenya and Indonesia tend to attend most ceremonies and are extremely enthusiastic about the whole tradition. There is a significant difference in overall attendance pattern between the top three participants (Kenya, Indonesia and Malaysia) and the rest (topped by Hong Kong and Singapore).

Interestingly Indonesia and Malaysia, with high attendance rates, also had significant numbers of students graduating, which may help account for the high attendance as a “me too” or herd effect. However this does not explain the highest participants (Kenya) or the poor showing of Hong Kong and Chinese students. It is possible that a contributing factor may be English proficiency, which would be supported by the good showing of Kenya, Indonesia and Malaysia and the poor showing of Hong Kong and Chinese students, but does not explain the behaviour of the Singaporean students. Australians and Permanent Residents tend to be a bit more blasé about our particular ceremony, and we attribute this to the fact that they missed direct entry via TEE/TER.

If we look at fields of study we find that most of the Information Technology students tend to come along to the ceremonies- we have not figured out whether this is because they are studying one of our most difficult Diplomas and feel so relieved from their achievements or because they have an extremely involved lecturer who urges them to come along.

Table 1.

		200401	200303	200302	200301	200203	Cumulative
Kenya	Attend	2	3	5	6	4	20
	Total	11	5	12	20	5	53
	%	18%	60%	42%	30%	80%	38%
Indonesia	Attend	23	19	9	27	25	103
	Total	99	56	62	72	44	333
	%	23%	34%	15%	38%	57%	31%
Malaysia	Attend	10	5	13	10	5	43
	Total	38	18	44	38	25	163
	%	26%	28%	30%	26%	20%	26%
Hong Kong	Attend	5	5	2	12	7	31
	Total	54	27	44	51	30	206
	%	9%	19%	5%	24%	23%	15%
China	Attend	5	2	3	1	1	12
	Total	31	6	14	17	15	83
	%	16%	33%	21%	6%	7%	14%
Singapore	Attend	3	0	1	4	1	9
	Total	13	11	13	21	21	79
	%	23%	0%	8%	19%	5%	11%
Aus/PR	Attend	2	1	2	1	0	6
	Total	5	12	30	15	12	74
	%	40%	8%	7%	7%	0%	8%
Other	Attend	11	7	5	11	5	39
	Total	57	37	39	42	19	194
	%	19%	19%	13%	26%	26%	20%

Conclusion

Graduation and the ceremony affiliated with it means different things to different people and cultures. In Australia, it is a day to celebrate and be proud of all the hard work with its consequent achievements. Most International Students realise this fact and appreciate it. They understand that they have taken the first step toward something great and it should be recognised formally. So, even if it is only a Diploma it is the handing over of such an award and the acceptance of it that highlights achievement.

The organisation of the ceremony must be flawless. When students look back on the day and revive memories and events through photographs, it must be a time of good memories of a smooth graduation ceremony. They do not want to have their pictures taken grasping someone else’s award.

As Student Advisors, we can both remember the first time we organised a graduation ceremony. We can remember the sinking feeling when we realised the enormity of the task. It is hard work, mainly in the details that have to be checked and rechecked. We are aware that for some students, graduation is a very important ceremony which they will remember most of their lives. We have to contribute positively to their memories before we say goodbye and prepare them as best we can for the next step they start to take, whether that be continuation of studies or homecoming.

References

- A word on "reverse culture shock" (2002). *Office of International Education* Rhode Island.. University of Rhode Island.
- Azimi, A. Culture shock/reverse culture shock: Cultural transition from home country to host country and back home again. *Lemar-Aftaab*
- Casper, G. (1993). 'Concerning culture and cultures'. USA. Stanford University.
- Colick, Z. (2004). 'Senior traditions include morning drink, swim in fountain at Old Main'. *Arizona Daily Wildcat*,
- Coping with reverse cultural shock (1997) *Transitions a guide for international students in their final semester* Brisbane :International Student Services, University of Technology.
- Gilbert, K. (2004). 'Separate graduation, equal students'. USA: *UCSD Guardian*.
- History of graduation (2003). Retrieved 17 August, 2004 from <http://www.brownielocks.com/graduation.html>
- Hobsbawn, Eric (1983) 'Inventing traditions', Hobsbawn, E. & T. Ranger (eds) *The invention of tradition* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kramer, Steve (1998) The Flags of the World FAQ. Retrieved 12th September 2004 from <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/faq2.html#popcolour>
- Lembo, M. A. ((2004) 'Renewal: Rites of passage'. Florida: The Crystal Garden.
- Nguyen, T. *2004). 'To fling or not to fling tortillas? That is the question. Arizona: *The Arizona Daily Wildcat*.
- Nsofor, Chudi (1990) 'Adjustment to Life and Study in Australia: A Student's Perspective' presented at the Australian College of Education National Conference, Bond University, Queensland, September 1990.
- O'Neil, D. (2002). 'Process of socialization: Rites of passage. Retrieved from: http://anthro.palomar.edu/social/soc_4.htm
- Rites of Passage in various cultures ideas and information retrieved 12th September 2004 from http://www.sfusd.k12.ca.us/schwww/sch618/RootsWeb/Roots_Search.html
- Rohrlich, B.f. & Kohls, L. R. (2004) 'What is culture shock? There and back again. *Survival kit for overseas living*.
- Sidhe, M (2002). 'Rites of passage' *Echoed voices: Raising pagan children* .Retrieved 8 June 2004 from http://www.echoedvoices.org/Jul2002/Raising_Pagans.html
- Ward, L. (2004). 'Mobile "girl power" car a graduation tradition'. Arizona *Ahwatukee Foothills News*.

Valedictory Speech

Honoured Guests, Vice Principal, Lecturers, and Dear Friends. It has been a great honour to get this excellent opportunity to address this particular gathering. Families and friends, on behalf of the graduates, I welcome you.

First, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate my fellow graduates on their academic accomplishments. Getting a degree from PIBT has taught us hard work and dedication, which we put in to get these awards. Please let me remind you, behind these awards lies the great saga of,

- Help from the lecturers,
- Hard work and dedication,
- Support from family and friends,
- God's grace, and most of all,
- Couple of weeks of not going to the nightclubs in Northbridge.

I would like to recall some good and not so good memories I've have had during my life at PIBT.

The lecturers – they have been remarkable and have provided us with exceptional knowledge and wisdom. They have worked beyond their powers so that we can succeed in our academic endeavours. Although we hated you because of the lack of sleep caused by the never-ending assignments and mini tests, we thank you for the assignments and tests which prepared us mentally and physically to face the final exam. You have inspired us all.

Friends – the best thing that has happened to me in PIBT. As Christi Mary Warner said “A friend is one who knows all about you and likes you anyway.” Which is really incredible in my case. Thank you guys, for some fantastic moments we have had together. We have been there for each other during happy and troubled times.

On behalf of the graduates, I thank the families and friends for their support and the encouragement. You gave us hope when we were really down. A few words of support proved to be tremendous. Most of all thank you sending money whenever we asked for it.

PIBT may be a small institution, but it made me make new friends. I felt familiar with the surroundings and atmosphere. Why you may ask? It is because of the diversity of our pasts and cultures. We are all from different countries and backgrounds. When we first came to PIBT the one thing we had in common was, PIBT itself. It is because of PIBT that we met, and we found unity in diversity. There was never a chance for petty differences. It is really saddening to leave PIBT, but one has to end if something has to begin. I am really looking forward to do my bachelors in Computer Science at Edith Cowan University – Mt Lawley.

Today, my fellow graduates, we have reached an important milestone in our life. We are the cynosure of all eyes – that of the lecturers and our families and friends. This very moment is a celebration for all of us, but we do realise the obligations ahead of us. As Robert Frost said

“The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
but I have promises to keep,
and miles to go before I sleep,
and miles to go before I sleep.”

Today our parents would be very proud our achievements but still a little bit sad that their “babies” are growing up, so fast. For them we may be babies, but in the eyes of the community we are adults. We are expected to be responsible for our actions.

Life would surely prove to be difficult – it sure has proved to be very difficult when our Internet download volume finished – nearly all of you would have sour experiences of that. I couldn't check my mails! Life proved to be very, very difficult when we wanted to use the computer labs and the labs were full. Life is full of challenges, so, be prepared to face them.

Last but not least, everyone here was talking about leaving, which would make all of us feel unhappy.

Friends!

When did we leave each other to meet again?

When did we forget each other to remember again?

Written and delivered by a student who had just received his Diploma in Computing and Information Technology.