

# The Impact of Returning Asian Students of NZ-Asia Relationships

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## Introduction

Asian students need to be considered within New Zealand's broader engagement with Asia. The New Zealand government has invested significant funding into recruiting international students; professional development for those working with international students; and research into the experiences of international students in New Zealand. Only limited research has investigated the experiences and implications of international students returning to their countries of origin and it has been within frames of either development studies (McGrath, 1998) or sociology (Butcher, 2003), with focus on challenges international students' face in their re-entry experiences. This paper seeks to consider Asian students within international relations more broadly. In particular, this paper asks how Asian students who have studied in New Zealand could be nurtured as friends and allies of New Zealand longer term.

Recent scholarship on Asian students' experiences in New Zealand tended to isolate their experiences from wider issues of national identity, migration, notions of integration, and issues around global movement of people, the impact of neo-liberalism on the delivery and marketing of education, and effects on social cohesion. Tangential issues of border control, national security, aid and development, regional security, free-trade agreements, global health issues and the changing contours of the global economic markets received even less attention in discussions around Asian students in New Zealand.

These gaps present a serious deficiency in our discussions and analysis of the issues surrounding Asian students in New Zealand so that, as Vivienne Anderson points out,

*"...much literature concerned with international students' experiences draws on 'cultural difference' as a 'primary analytical tool'. At a surface level, this results in a distortion or oversimplification of complex human realities. The diversity of both 'New Zealand' and 'international' students (for example) is effectively obscured."* (Anderson 2006)

New Zealand has long hosted Asian students, with the Colombo Plan holding a particularly nostalgic place in New Zealand's collective memory. The Colombo Plan helped to establish the first modern elite in many Asian countries. However, the world has changed since then to the extent that we can no longer necessarily use the experiences of Colombo Plan students as our benchmark.

Students who have returned to their home countries in Asia with positive first-hand experiences of New Zealand can act as some of New Zealand's best diplomats and form a valuable pool of potential employees for New Zealand, Asian and multi-national companies. Returning students will draw upon their social and educational experiences in New Zealand. An emphasis on high quality and good value in both the educative and living experiences for students should provide enduring opportunities for further successful marketing of New Zealand and building of long term mutually beneficial relationships.

Asian students, both in New Zealand, and once they have returned to their countries of origin, have much to offer New Zealand. Despite decades of Asian immigration and Asian students, New Zealand's "Asian" literacy is poor. (Asia:NZ, 2006) New Zealand needs to find ways to draw on the skills of Asian students to sharpen New Zealanders' knowledge of Asia. At the same time, New Zealand needs to find ways to provide greater opportunities for our Asian students to become "New Zealand literate" so that they can make an effective contribution to

New Zealand as well as enjoy life in New Zealand to the fullest. Moreover, “New Zealand literate” Asian students can effectively promote New Zealand overseas.

Important linkages via returned students into the Asian region such as alumni networks build on existing connections and advance educational links. Also person-to-person networks, computer-mediated communities, religious networks and other more informal networks amongst returned Asian students maintain important connections of New Zealand’s alumni in the Asian region. Strategically, there are important issues to consider around ongoing engagement between returned Asian students and New Zealand in industry, politics and education. At a people-to-people level, the types of communities that returned Asian students establish and the success they have in entering the labour market are salient issues. There are also significant implications for New Zealand to consider: do these returned Asian students use their New Zealand study experiences to maintain and build linkages with New Zealand and does New Zealand utilise these students effectively?

Before going further a caveat is required. Asia is a remarkably diverse continent and one has to realise that students drawn from Asia reflect some of that diversity but not all of it. For example East Asian students dominate the numbers of Asian students coming to New Zealand with China at one stage providing over 40% of all international students. With the majority of students being fee paying rather than scholarship students only those from backgrounds that could afford overseas education could come. So while this paper speaks of ‘Asian’ students in the broadest sense of the term, and in relation to connections between New Zealand and the countries that make up the continent of Asia, we do so arbitrarily and realise our discussion relates to part of the diversity that is Asia itself.

On completing studies most international students return home which largely means returning to Asia. This paper seeks to answer the question “What is the impact of returning Asian students on NZ- Asia relationships?” To answer this question, we draw on information gathered from: our past re-entry research; wider international student research; correspondence and alumni news; and a recent Pilot study

This paper provides: a brief history of Asian students in New Zealand; data on the international student as an export earner for New Zealand; comment on Asian students and the New Zealand host communities; a précis of the export education policy environment; analysis of Asian students’ views of New Zealand culture; research on Asian students’ perspectives on re-entry; a brief remark on Asian countries’ incentives for returning students; a note about ‘third-place people’; and finally, conclusions and recommendations on ways to use returning Asian students, as well as the New Zealand diaspora in Asia and Asian New Zealanders, to enhance New Zealand Asian relationships.

### **A brief history of Asian students in New Zealand**

Students coming from Asia to New Zealand first came under the Colombo Plan in the 1950s, ostensibly as a form of educational aid somewhat aligned with New Zealand’s foreign policy. As a publication at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Colombo Plan identified, “today, in New Zealand at least the Colombo Plan is remembered mainly as a plan for bringing Asian students to New Zealand rather than as a wide-ranging effort to support the development of Asian countries.” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2001)

During this era, many New Zealanders involved in tertiary education came into contact with these Asian students. Many lasting friendships and professional relationships were formed, resulting in continuing contacts and positive views of Asian students. Many of the Asian students who studied in New Zealand during this period appreciated the social and educational opportunities they were given. Their experiences in New Zealand were genuinely life changing and set them on a path to influence in their home countries. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2001) Beyond equipping students to return to their countries of origin, the

Colombo Plan also enabled students to develop and maintain strong friendships with New Zealanders and fond memories of their New Zealand experiences. Colombo Plan era graduates became a conduit for ongoing good-will between Asia and New Zealand.

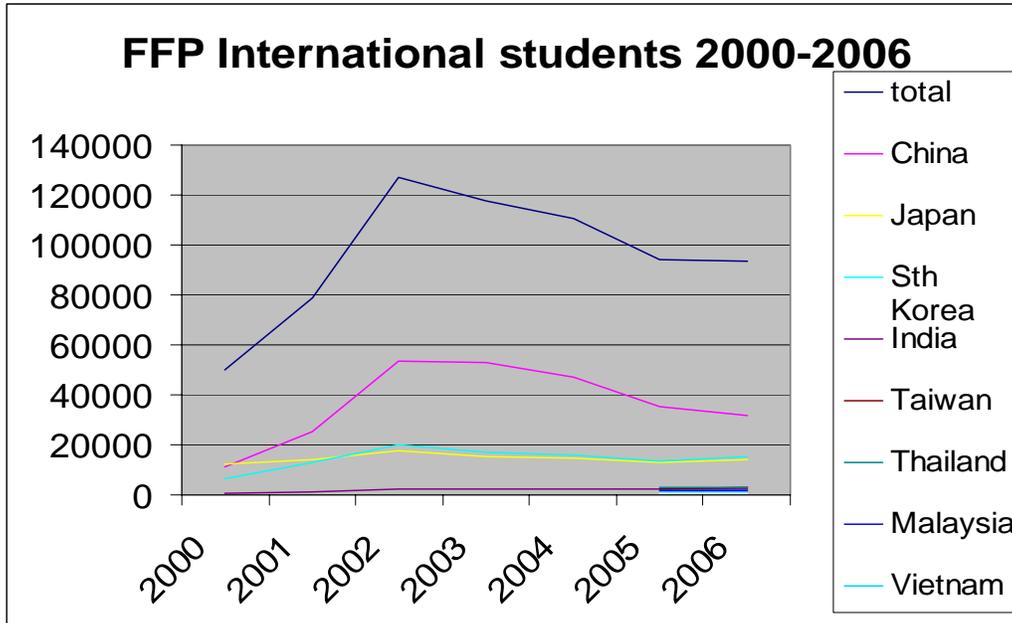
The Colombo Plan era ultimately drew to a close in the 1980s. Changes in foreign policy priorities, aid objectives and educational philosophy brought about changes toward open market policies and selling New Zealand education to international students at full cost for tuition and services. (Tarling,2004) Under open market policies, the bulk of new international students came from Asia and by the end of the 1990's, increasing numbers of students came from the People's Republic of China (PRC). With the end of the Colombo Plan and education-as-aid, the full-fee paying Asian students that came to New Zealand became important for new reasons, in particular as an export earner.

**Growing pains: the Asian student as a New Zealand export earner**

“The Government has reversed its longstanding opposition to high fees for overseas students in a bid to earn export income from New Zealand’s education services” (NZ Herald, 1998), proclaimed the *New Zealand Herald* in late-1988, in relation to the soon to be enacted legislation that would allow New Zealand educational institutions to sell places to overseas students for profit.

A greater number of places for international students became available and open to a greater range of countries. The overall effect was numbers dipping in the early 1990s, especially from Asia, but increasing through the mid 1990s and on until levelling out and dropping a little around 2004. This can be seen in Figure 1

*Figure 1 Full Fee Paying International Students 2000-2006*



Source Ministry of Education Statistics – note only 2005/2006 data included for South East Asian countries.

In the open market, international students increasingly represented income for public education institutions and consolidation of profit for many private education providers.

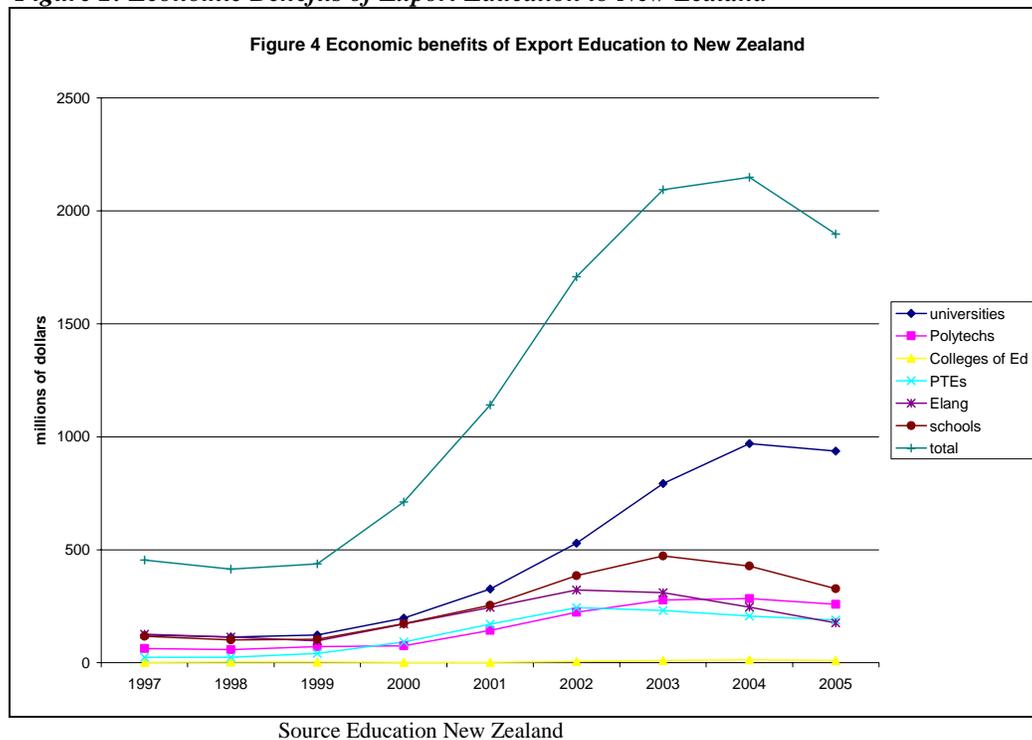
Most export education marketing focussed on Asia with China, Japan and South Korea becoming important markets from where a flood of students came to learn English and to gain tertiary education qualifications. Primary and secondary schools entered the market and total numbers of international students peaked at a little over 120,000 in 2003-4, compared to barely 5000 ten years earlier. The proportion of Asian students during this period increased to around 87 percent of the international student body.

Contributing greatly to this meteoric rise in numbers were Chinese students, whose numbers peaked at around 55,000 in the 2003/04 period. Similar Chinese student numbers were recorded for Australia and the USA in the same period howbeit spread amongst significantly larger host populations compared with New Zealand.

### Asian students and the New Zealand host communities

The increase in Asian students clearly had economic benefits. What became apparent was the under-preparedness of our host communities for the subsequent demographic changes in their neighbourhoods. As the number of Asian students rose rapidly, the host communities became more aware of them frequently due to providing goods and services such as accommodation, food, transport, recreation, entertainment along with the provision of education and its attendant services such as libraries, bookshops, teachers, and computers. The economic benefits of providing goods and services became quite clear as illustrated in figure 2

**Figure 2: Economic Benefits of Export Education to New Zealand**



In 2003, the economic benefit was \$2.09 billion and in 2004, \$2.15 with over 40 percent from China, with a further 40 percent plus from other parts of Asia. The economic benefits of export education to New Zealand were recognised and embraced. However, long-term gains from selling education would only come through quality education and good living experiences for students. Positive experiences had been the hallmark during the Colombo Plan era when value for money was easy to demonstrate. With the significant shift from aid to trade in export education, there was increasing alarm voiced about “cash cow” attitudes

towards Asian students. Tim Groser, at that time at the Asia 2000 Foundation, amongst others, warned of such an attitude (Groser, 2000) especially as students were now paying clients and customers, people not commodities, and had the potential to develop positive or negative future relationships with New Zealand. These changes in philosophy toward Asian students were being mirrored in New Zealand's public sector at large, not least in tertiary education.

The rapidly increasing numbers of Asian students coincided with increased Asian immigration along with favouring international students for longer-term migration on the completion of their studies. Seventeen percent of new migrants in 2006 had previously held study permits. (DoL, 2006) This combination effectively put a lot more Asian faces into the New Zealand host community, whether the host community was prepared for this shift toward a more culturally diverse population or not.

At a limited level of interest and interaction, host culture attitudes were generally supportive. But New Zealand's general under-preparedness for Asian migration at a host community level resulted in barriers to engagement. (For a fuller discussion of this see "*Engaging Asian Communities in New Zealand*," McGrath et al, 2005). Examples of negative social behaviour increased both towards and amongst Asian students. Sometimes community attitudes were expressed as racism and when reported by Asian students tended to have greater impact on them than the positive attitudes and friendships they encountered. (McGrath & Butcher, 2004) Portrayals in the media of Asian students added to host community views. (Spoonley & Trilin, 2004) Media reports tended to identify Asian students as being responsible for health problems, crime and as visa abusers. (Rotherham, 2003) High public exposure of negative incidents tended to magnify the influence on host community perceptions.

Similar effects were reflected in the countries students came from, where (largely negative) New Zealand headlines were subsequently reported in Asian media and where Asian students reported personal incidents on websites, blogs and in chat rooms. (Li, 2007) Crime and safety issues began having an effect in countries of origin as Asian students experienced burglaries and other crimes. Whatever the reality of the *actual* crime, the perception in Asia was consequential. Much of this may be seen as natural effects of the increased numbers. However, in its marketing, New Zealand promised a clean green, safe and purportedly "crime free" environment.

When large private education providers, Modern Age and Carich, folded affecting hundreds of Asian students the perception in Asia of New Zealand as a good international education destination waned. Increasing exchange rates and tuition fee rises raised the cost of education and new student numbers began declining as value for money diminished. Overall numbers have dropped to a total of over 80,000 in 2006/7 from the peak of over 120,000 in 2003/4.

Large numbers of Asian students coming to New Zealand to study provided an opportunity for growth in New Zealand Asia relationships. However, there has been a slowness to recognise value in other than economic ways. This growth could be used to assist internationalisation and to build foundations for future relationships. During the Colombo Plan era, there was a clear focus that students were brought here as part of New Zealand's foreign policy interests. In moving to selling education internationally for economic gain, the chance to affect bilateral and multilateral relationships at national, personal and community levels has not been given sufficient attention. The building of foundations for future relationships occurred in *ad hoc* ways rather than managed with clear public good objects in view.

## **The export education policy environment**

This *ad hoc* development may be a reflection of the policy environment around export education in New Zealand. Until the late 1990s, New Zealand's export education industry was largely unregulated. However, enacting a mandatory *Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students* and relying on quality assurance, such as NZQA audits, became the main tools used as the means of assuring both care of students and quality systems in delivering education. (Butcher, 2004)

Little or no attempt was made to consider the effects of large numbers of Asian students entering education in New Zealand. (Butcher 2003) In four large reports (TEAC , 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c) by the then Tertiary Education Advisory Commission (subsequently the Tertiary Education Commission) related to future directions in New Zealand tertiary education, international students received one fleeting reference, yet at the time they accounted for almost eight percent of the student body and their numbers were rising. (McGrath & Butcher, 2001) Successive reports on internationalisation (Back et al, 1998, McInnis et al, 2006) of education indicate limited progress in relation to building international relationships at grassroots interpersonal levels.

This points to a need for government and educational institutions, when developing and implementing policies, to recognise, the opportunities afforded by the presence of Asian students in New Zealand as significant for engagement with Asia in long term sustainable ways. Greater consideration of New Zealand's Asian students in policy development in connection with New Zealand's overall goals of engagement with Asia is needed. The Asian student body in New Zealand and New Zealand's Asian alumnus represent a unique resource for developing our relationships with Asia and Asian people. As hosts to such large numbers of potential New Zealand Asia relationship facilitators, we need to become more proactive in intentionally nurturing the relationships at the foundational stages when the Asian students are here. Given that then, it is instructive to consider Asian students' view of New Zealand culture and the extent to which it welcomes them.

## **Asian students' views of the New Zealand culture**

The decade of growth for international education in New Zealand brought with it changes in the New Zealand environment for Asian students coming to study here. Frequently, Asian students encountered large numbers of other Asian students and, for many, much of their adjustment and socialisation occurred amongst co-nationals and other international students. Many Asian students reported limited opportunities to engage with New Zealand domestic students and with the host communities. (Ward & Masgoret, 2004) Research shows that Asian students felt that the education they received here was of a generally good standard and that accommodation and living were generally good but a little more costly than the students would like. (Ward & Masgoret 2004, Ho et al, 2007, McGrath & Butcher 2004)

Asian students report New Zealanders as superficially friendly but somewhat reticent to engage in quality relationships. (Ward & Masgoret, 2004) The exceptions frequently relate to quality home-stay experiences and deep lasting friendships with some domestic students, but the majority of Asian students return home having not achieved a level of engagement with the host community or New Zealand student peers that they would have liked. Some Asian students received negative messages such as racist remarks, financial exploitation or poor treatment by service providers. In our current research the most frequently encountered problems returned Asian students identified in New Zealand are transport and communication. New Zealand's poor transport infrastructure and the struggles to communicate well in English, along with experiencing cultural distance and being unable to make New Zealand friends, were the leading problems encountered by international students

in New Zealand in a national survey. (Ward & Masgoret, 2004) Asian students are less likely to maintain friendships with New Zealanders once they have returned home if they have not developed those friendships in the first instance. The task of developing those friendships falls to Asian students as much, if not more, to New Zealand students; and to the institutions where Asian students study.

Research illustrates that many Asian students ended their time in New Zealand with a desire to stay on but the lack of employment opportunities and the pull of home and family mitigated that desire. (Butcher, 2003) Despite this, there are increasing numbers of international students remaining in New Zealand after graduation. (DoL, 2006) This may be seen in part as due to the desire to stay on and to favorable immigration policies.

During their sojourn many Asian students formed friendships with their peers. Frequently, these friendships and networks are maintained after graduation and developed into successful business and community service relationships. Research shows that amongst recent Asian students studying in New Zealand, their friendships are more likely to be made amongst co-nationals and other internationals rather than with local domestic students and other New Zealanders. (Ward & Masgoret, 2004) At re-entry, many Asian students regretted that they had not engaged more with New Zealanders, although admitted that this was a demanding task. By contrast, during the Colombo Plan era Asian students reported many friendships with local domestic students and host communities. (Butcher, 2003) This has implications for Asia New Zealand relationships, especially if it is accepted that the presence of Asian students living and studying in New Zealand offers a significant opportunity to lay foundations for future developing relationships. Of particular importance to us here are where those long-term relationships are with students who have returned to Asia.

### **Home Again: Asian students' perspectives on re-entry**

The re-entry of graduates into their countries of origin is motivated largely by the twin factors of the pull from home and the lack of employment opportunities in New Zealand. Amongst returned graduates, a common theme has been their under-preparedness for their re-engagement into their home societies. (Mullins et al, 1995, Butcher, 2003, McGrath, 1998) Making good adjustments in the areas of lifestyle expectations, worldview change and the Asian work environment (McGrath, 1998) are all important for successful re-entry.

Ongoing work by the authors amongst returned Asian graduates indicates that these major areas for adjustment in re-entry remain but a new trend has begun to emerge. In our current research, for which we have undertaken a preliminary pilot survey of 25 returnees, almost a third of respondents indicated some awareness of re-entry issues. The term 'reverse culture shock' was used a number of times in the responses, along with other indications of knowledge around lifestyle expectations, world view change, especially around values, and an expectation of adjustment to the work environment. Many returnees also commented on the effect of New Zealand culture on their lives. Returnees' awareness of re-entry adjustment seems to have been drawn from a combination of general knowledge about re-entry issues and sources of specific information, which we have assumed to have come from re-entry preparation workshops conducted in their education institutions. Clearly, we cannot draw too much from such a small sample, but indicatively these findings suggest some potentially interesting trends.

Exposure to different family models and values, and coping with the expectations laid upon them, presents unique personal adjustments for returnees. For most returnees, they recognise the issue of relating back to family as part of their personal growth and a further challenge for their bicultural skills and personal qualities they developed while studying overseas; or they see it as a period of adjustment to live through rather than to grow through. (Christofi &

Thompson, 2007) The following themes of world view related areas in re-entry adjustment are indicators of the complexities of the adjustments in re-entry:

- Changed concepts of individuality and freedom,
- Changed nature and importance of relationships with peers and colleagues,
- Changed views of family,
- Changed values in areas of integrity, ethics, environment, materialism and relationships,
- Changed religious beliefs,
- Changed self image, and
- Changed lifestyle beliefs.

Here, we are particularly interested in returnees' adjustments to the work-force. In the same preliminary survey mentioned earlier, returnees' strongly recommended that they could be better equipped for the adjustments in the work place in Asia. Returnees' comments ranged from criticism that the course they had studied had done little to prepare them for the work place and that there was limited knowledge of Asian working environments, as most of the material in New Zealand courses was inherently theoretical and set against Western style work cultures and places. Again, these indicative findings suggest that there may be a need to adjust New Zealand courses to better reflect an international work place and a wider range of international literature. (Beath, 2007)

Re-entry research has demonstrated that in terms of the working environment, graduates tend towards two types of professions. The first type was to return to work in family-owned business; often, there had been a purpose in overseas education for that. Frequently, overseas education related to plans for the family to expand their business in some way or other. Sometimes it might simply be to gain quality understanding and methods in running a business, such as accounting and business practices. Other times it was to ensure current technology could be incorporated into the business without the need to go outside the family for partnerships. Where the graduate returned to a family related business or enterprise the family had set in place for them, inevitably they went through greater adjustments in returning to family desired levels of filial piety. (Butcher, 2003)

In contrast, the other tendency noted in research was where graduates were freer in their choices of job selection and the family had no intention of involving them in a family business. This second set of professional choice was a tendency amongst the graduates to move away from locally owned companies and local employers to overseas owned or multinational companies or employers. Seemingly contrary to the point noted above regarding the transportability of their New Zealand education, returnees' commented that their overseas education was better fitted for international companies or multinationals and that they were more comfortable working in that type of environment as the work practices were more in keeping with what they were educated for in New Zealand. However, it is worth noting that these comments were made in discussing the contrast of working for either the family business or for a multi-national company; the issues around the transportability and relevance of New Zealand education nonetheless remain.

### **Asian countries' incentives for returning students**

Some Asian countries are also providing incentives for their graduate students to return. For example, in talking about returning Chinese migrants in general, Ip notes that:

*The current Chinese policy is designed to reverse the brain-drain, and it has been compared to what the Taiwanese government did very successfully from the late 1970s onwards: to attract overseas trained highly-skilled people to "return to the motherland." A number of*

*“Science Parks”, “Special Development Zones” or “Hi-Tech Zones” have been set up in Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen. Returnees enjoyed simplified application and registration procedures for setting up new business ventures, and they also enjoyed “tax-breaks”, access to research funding, low interest loans, tax-free equipment, and even tax-free goods for personal use. But in the long term, it is the potential scope, the chances for further professional advancement, and the opportunity to “play a bigger role” that China can give to its talented returned migrants that would be considered the most important factors for attracting returnees. (Ip, 2004)*

Iredale and Guo, in a comparative case study of the roles of returnees to Taiwan, China and Bangladesh, identified benefits to an origin country in recruiting its overseas graduates to return and also showed the transforming and influential roles these same graduates have. Amongst the vehicles for ongoing influence these graduates form were the trans-national communities that become agencies for social transformation and conduits for flow-on effects in business and other relationships. (Iredale & Gao,2001) In another study of graduates returning to Indonesia, (Cannon, 2000) a higher stock was placed on such things as changes in intellectual abilities, attitudes and cultural perspectives than on narrower career advantages such as salary and promotion, which frequently suffer in the immediate term as a consequence of time out for international education.

It is useful to see returning Asian students within a broader trend of what is called trans-nationalism amongst migrants as the majority of Asian students in New Zealand do not remain in New Zealand, but return home or elsewhere. In talking about Chinese migrants to New Zealand who returned to China, Ip identified China’s strong economy as a significant factor in migrants’ returning, along with subtle cultural factors at play. Similarly to returnees to Hong Kong and Taiwan, returnees to China identified better work opportunities, the chance to take up their parents’ businesses, ‘matching up’ with Chinese spouses and a return to familiar surroundings as factors instrumental in their return to China. (Ip, 2006) Similarly, the factors that impact a student’s choice to return back are manifold and will be influenced by the countries which they come from and the expectations they come to New Zealand with. Whether they return or stay Asian students are a significant conduit for building and developing relationships between New Zealand and Asian countries and peoples.

Many returnees retain contact with New Zealanders and with their own cohort of Asian graduates. These networks are retained both formally and informally. Formally, Asian students may be part of alumni associations or international business or trade councils. However, these formal bodies are largely dominated by less recent graduates. (Butcher 2003) Recent graduates, by contrast, use more informal links, including computer-mediated communities, such as chat-rooms or blogs(for example sky kiwi, Ringo, Skype). These computer-mediated communities are increasingly seen as an important and ubiquitous feature in the migration experiences of skilled migrants, in the formation of their identities and in their settlement or re-settlement experiences. Any endeavours to engage with returning Asian students will have to utilise both formal and informal networks.

### **Third-Place People**

Cannon argues that the value of the overseas experience lies primarily in what he calls a “third place” - a distinct intercultural group in professional society, which gives advantage to employers, individuals and communities through its unique potential and relationships within global society. Butcher similarly refers to a place to call “home” being a place of re-integration of self identity and upon which a returnees’ sense of identity and security may be based, that is a changed “home” or place from the country they left for study or the New Zealand they studied in. (Butcher, 2003) This “third place” or “home” is the place where the graduate has made accommodations with family and friends, is comfortable in the lifestyle of the home community, has integrated their world view change, and has adjusted to their

situation within the work environment. Potentially, this “third place” can be one of significant influence, as they are equipped to work cross-culturally, with personal experience and understanding of both Asia and New Zealand cultures. For New Zealand, there are unique opportunities for connection with ‘third place’ people, as “third place people” already have good connections with Asia and New Zealand and have made adjustment back into their countries of origin.

These opportunities are often neglected as the potential for Asian graduates to be facilitators of connections for New Zealand at people-to-people levels as well as community, organisationally and nationally is not fully realised. Our research indicates Asian graduates want to participate in on-going linkages and relationships.

New Zealand educated Asian graduates live in “third places” in their societies. To New Zealand they are invaluable resources because in their experience back in Asia: they are instantly capable of being ambassadors for New Zealand, commentators on New Zealand values, people and lifestyle as well as witnesses to the net good obtained from education and experience gained whilst living in New Zealand. “Third place” people in Asian communities influence New Zealand’s relationship with those communities. Their potential is enormous: from providing education about New Zealand in that community, to mutually enhancing relationships of that community with New Zealand, perhaps serving as a catalyst for further relationships of varying kinds. Asian graduate occupational and social profiles are indicative of upward mobility and growing influence throughout life. Potentially, each New Zealand graduate in Asia could be of significant influence.

Our earlier research into re-entry and our ongoing research in this area clearly indicate the value of the New Zealand experience to the Asian graduate. (McGrath, 1998, Butcher 2003) It is also apparent that the experience could be improved on in several ways that would enhance and build on what are generally positive relationships. In thinking about the building of relationships, two key principles have emerged from comments of New Zealand’s Asian graduates. These two principles are:

- Relationship or *guan xi* – the establishment of long lasting and mutually trusted relationships.
- Relevance or *guan lian* – whatever we do needs to be relevant to those whom we seek to relate to ideally of mutual relevance.

The most commonly reported regret of Asian graduates is in making friends with New Zealanders, ideally domestic students. If we wish to enhance New Zealand Asia relationships in the future then opportunities need to be taken to develop long-lasting and mutually trusting relationships. These friendships and networks should be developed while Asian students are studying in New Zealand, but they can also be promoted through the formal and informal networks noted above. Relevance is also important. Often New Zealanders discover relationships with Asian graduates when they have a particular need met, like hosting or information. That can be one-sided. More recently, the marketing of international education into Asia has been more about economic benefits to New Zealand rather than the emphasis of the earlier era, which was about providing quality education of relevance and use for development within Asia.

International education in New Zealand needs to be about mutual relevance and on-going relationships. Opportunities for mutual relevance could include joint venture projects, business partnerships, community linkages, advisory networks, professional association and continuing personal contact and friendship. Working hard to build long lasting and mutually trusting relationships must start early: when Asian students are living and studying here.

The lesson from the Colombo Plan era is building of lasting friendships begins in the student days and those relationships, friendships and experiences can be of lasting value and mutual benefit. Asia is becoming increasingly important to New Zealand: New Zealanders need to be equipped to engage successfully with Asia. The education environment is formative for engaging with Asian students. Here, learning to relate and build connections and friendships between New Zealand and Asian students can occur.

### **Towards maturity: Recommendations to enhance New Zealand Asia relationships**

Amongst many Colombo Plan students there is tremendous good-will toward New Zealand because of the positive experience many of those students had had here and the ongoing contacts they have with New Zealanders and other alumni. Will the same be able to be said of present Asian students in New Zealand? Or has globalisation wrought its effect upon the world in such a fundamental way that we need to completely re-think how effective person-to-person relationships are? Should we instead undertake a broader, more significant engagement socially, politically and economically with the Asian region, whence most of these Asian students shall return? We would suggest that we need to be careful about how much we rely on nostalgia and the good-will of students' past. This will only get us so far.

To go further we are making seven recommendations we believe will enhance New Zealand Asia relationships:

1. Nurture person to person relationships both the formal and the informal
2. Move to a multi-cultural curriculum and pedagogy that will improve 'Asian literacy' and relevance of courses and teaching to the Asian setting
3. Reduce social exclusion and discrimination in society
4. Develop programmes to enhance intercultural mixing in the community and within the educational environment and provide support and encouragement for this development
5. Include Asian students in business, industry and community events.
6. Develop policy frameworks to enhance engagement particularly in educational institutions, local and national government agencies
7. Asian students to be included in a framework wider than just educational institutions in policy development.

The Asia New Zealand Foundation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, the international education industry, specific friendship societies, community groups, sports clubs, religious organisations, churches, non-governmental organisations, aid organisations, and educational institutions all have roles to play in assisting the promotion of services to assist in growing the New Zealand Asia relationship. These organisations can be initiators of focus on the resource of Asian students as catalysts in growing New Zealand's relationship with Asia.

Further work to quality enhance this aspect of engagement with Asia needs to be done. This should include considering Asian students within the framework of international relations more broadly and not just within the education framework. Grasping opportunities in industry and education is needed to ensure the present generation of Asian students become significant as returned graduates in positively influencing their countries' relationship with New Zealand, so that these countries, along with their New Zealand graduates, become our friends and allies both now and in the future.

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