

# Thinking beyond the classroom in internationalised higher education: learning from six teacher education graduates who have ‘gone home’

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The internationalisation of higher education (HE) is not a neutral set of processes. Rather, it is shaped by political, historical, geographical, social and cultural relationships. Complex relationships are also forged through internationalised HE, as graduates build connections with new places, people and ideas, shaping their study contexts and the contexts that they return to in unique ways. With this in mind, Madge, Raghuram and Noxolo (2009) called for the development of an ‘engaged pedagogy’, which recognises the relationships inherent in HE provision and the responsibilities that they entail. They argued that such a pedagogy requires: (1) critical attention to the position from which internationalised HE is envisaged; (2) genuine dialogue concerning what constitutes ‘best practice’; (3) responsiveness to students’ needs beyond the classroom; (4) attention to contextual specificities; and (5) recognition of the quandaries inherent in HE provision.

In this paper, we grapple with what an engaged pedagogy may look like in practice, in light of our interviews with six Malaysia-based graduates of a ‘twinned’ teacher education programme. The programme ran from 2009 to 2013, and was jointly developed through a Malaysian government-New Zealand university partnership. Students in the programme completed their first and fourth years of study in Malaysia, and their second and third years in New Zealand, graduating with an English language teaching qualification from their New Zealand university. The students’ selection for the programme was based on academic ability; their New Zealand study fees were covered by a Malaysian government scholarship, and all were bonded to complete five years teaching service in Malaysia post graduation. On completion of their degree, most were placed in schools characterised by low English proficiency scores, some in very rural and remote locations. The teachers included in this paper were placed in one part of Malaysia, and were interviewed in person in February 2015. They were part of a broader 2014-2015 comparative qualitative research project aimed at tracking the first year teaching journeys of 13 Malaysia-based and six New Zealand-based beginning teachers. The project aimed to explore the beginning teachers’ first year teaching experiences in relation to their specific schooling contexts and broader education policy frameworks.

We begin by tracing the development of the twinned teacher education programme and outlining our research rationale and methodology. We then describe the six teachers’ first year teaching experiences, including the contexts where they were living and working, the joys and challenges they identified, and their aspirations for the future. In particular, we highlight the material challenges inherent in their study to work transitions; their day-to-day resiliency; and the active ways in which they were shaping their school communities by enacting and ‘translating’ their teaching knowledge in unique school settings. We conclude by asking what our responsibilities are as HE professionals to collaborate across locations and think beyond our classrooms, for the benefit of our students and graduates, and those they work with in future.