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Study Abroad Self-Selection Amongst First-Year Japanese University Students

Andrew Nowlan[a]
Kwansei Gakuin University
Ruolan Wang
University of Liverpool
Laureate Online Education

Abstract: *Applying a mixed-methods design, this study aims to generate knowledge regarding decreasing study abroad involvement amongst Japanese students. Based on data collected from a group of first-year Japanese university students, the authors propose six qualities of a predominantly willing, or self-selecting, group of study abroad participants, including 1) achievement in English-proficiency testing; 2) prior international experience and authentic cross-cultural interactions; 3) purpose and meaning connected to international experience, 4) a perception of barriers to study abroad as surmountable; 5) flexible beliefs on job hunting and lifetime employment; and 6) greater international posture. This paper concludes with a discussion on the applicability of our findings to universities across Japan and in the Asia-Pacific region. Furthermore, we discuss the potential of fostering study abroad intent in the second language classroom, thus leading to greater study abroad interest and participation.*

Keywords: *higher education, Japan, L2 curriculum, self-selection, study abroad*

Introduction and Context

Increasing accessibility, interconnectedness, and global collaboration has made the practice of study abroad at higher education institutions (HEIs) around the world a global phenomenon. Defined as "students who cross national borders for the purpose or in the context of their studies" (Kelo, Teichler and Wächter 2006, p. 5), study abroad is often promoted as an academic activity that expands worldviews while helping participants acquire knowledge of foreign language and culture (Kinginger, 2009; OECD, 2017). In 2015, around 4.6 million students were involved in study abroad, and while this number has plateaued, compared to the exponential growth seen from 1970 to 2010, participation is projected to gradually increase with rising wealth in emerging economies and a demand for international education, often in the *lingua franca* of English (OECD, 2017).

Study abroad participation has been increasing amongst higher education students in China and South Korea; however, Japan has been experiencing a decline since the mid-2000s (MEXT, 2013; OECD, 2017). As of 2018, less than 1% of all Japanese higher education students were enrolled in HEIs abroad, compared to 1.9% of Chinese students and 3.3% of South Korean students (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018a). One factor related to the decline relates to Japan's demographics, especially its ageing society and the corresponding decrease of those under 19 years old (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017). Some identify recent troubles with the national economy and increased costs of higher education as reasons why more students lack the means to take overseas sojourns (Lassegard, 2013; Yonezawa, 2013). While these factors are associated with slumping participation numbers, it is important to note that enrollment in Japan's HEIs – especially in the more elite

[a] **Correspondence can be directed to:** anowlan@kwansei.ac.jp

institutions – has remained relatively stable over recent decades (MEXT, 2014), leading to criticism of the massification of Japanese higher education (Yamada, 2015).

College registration in Japan has been trending upwards, with a 2015 historical high of 63.24% of university-aged citizens being enrolled in tertiary institutions (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018b). This is partially due to the loosening of acceptance criteria set by the government in the 1990s, implemented under the assumption that diversification and competition would have a synergistic effect on graduate outcomes (OECD, 2017). A negative consequence of the top-tier universities maintaining their enrollment numbers, despite the ageing population, is that the pool of qualified and academically inclined students is decreasing; resulting in some institutions undermining their academic standards to maintain enrollment (Huang, 2011). This may result in students who are not as intellectually curious about the world outside of Japan, thus less interested in studying overseas.

In response to the decline in study abroad by Japanese university students, and recognizing that study abroad intent is significantly correlated with eventual participation (Luo and Jamieson-Drake, 2015), this paper is concerned with identifying qualities of *self-selecting* students, that is, those with particularly strong intent to study abroad. The literature provides limited understanding on the qualities of students with strong intent to study abroad, and the authors consider this knowledge as critical for eventually reversing the participation decline. As an initial step in generating such knowledge, the following research question is explored and answered in this paper: In the Japanese context, what are the qualities of self-selection that could be applied to university students with strong intent to study abroad?

This paper first examines certain unique features of Japanese society and how these manifest in higher education, according to the literature. The methodology will be summarized before providing the results and discussion of the study. The authors conclude the discussion by examining the potential of increasing study abroad intent at the micro level, via the second language (L2) classroom. Focus is placed on the L2 classroom due to the primary author's role as an instructor of foreign language and culture, and English being the target language for most Japanese study abroad participants. The notion of study abroad, as reflected on by the students in this study, can involve varying durations and types. Opportunities range from short two-week study sessions outside of the usual Japanese university semester, to one year sojourns where students are enrolled in classes with local students.

Literature Review

Japanese Society

According to the literature, one of the most dominating social characteristics of the Japanese population is the adherence to groupism, defined as "harmonization within the in-group, achieved when members downplay their individualism for the well-being of the group" (Hinenoya and Gatbonton 2000, p. 229). Asiatic and Confucian beliefs align people of East Asian countries to a group consciousness (Hinenoya and Gatbonton, 2000). This reflects the parlance and collective vernacular of Japanese people when describing how an unspoken consensus exists amongst them, alongside the belief that non-Japanese people are unable to fully comprehend such silent communicative dynamics (Greenholtz, 2003). The belief in a unique and collective mindset, accompanying the ability to understand each other without words is termed *haragei*. This attitude can manifest in English discourse when Japanese interlocutors use the phrase "we Japanese" in speaking definitively about the preferences and inclinations of all Japanese people. As a grouping society, classifying all citizens as unified when explaining phenomena and attitudes reaches back to 1939 when Suma describes the potential of invading China: "We Japanese are not under the illusion that we can conquer China" (Suma 1940, p. 233). This is prevalent in modern day Japanese society, as someone may claim that Korean food is "too spicy for we Japanese".

The Japanese brand of groupism has unique attributes, when compared to regional neighbors. Japan values the collectivistic trait of harmony, yet small groupings (e.g. the nuclear family unit) and a preference for privacy explain why Japanese society is considered as more individualistic than Chinese and South Korean society (Hofstede et al., 2010). Despite this, evidence of groupism can be displayed in the classroom, the boardroom, and the streets to the extent that Japan has been described as a "herd society" (Tsuneyoshi 1992, p. 31). The virtues of groupism result in a population that is generally polite, serious, modest, yet resistant to change (Hofstede et al., 2010). These traits can be misconstrued by non-Japanese people, who may label certain Japanese individuals and groups as exclusive or elitist (Hofstede et al., 2010). Japanese society is one driven by achievement, competition, and success (Hofstede et al., 2010), as reflected in long-working hours and the desire to make superior products, such as automobiles and electronics. If extending these values to HEIs, some contradictions emerge, including apathetic attitudes and a lack of motivation in learning (Clark, 2010).

Japanese Higher Education

Infamously described as a "motivational wasteland" (Berwick and Ross 1989, p. 207), Japanese HEIs have been criticized for a student body depicted as inward thinking, risk averse, and not interested in the world outside of Japan (Asaoka and Yano, 2009; West, 2015). Ota (2011) reinforced this notion by suggesting that younger generations of Japanese people have an apathetic attitude towards living abroad due to the cultural and linguistic challenges that are expected, alongside a belief that foreign countries are dangerous. This perception of danger and safety could enact uncertainty avoiding tendencies, resulting in students who are unwilling, unmotivated, and poorly prepared for study abroad.

Regarding language, one study revealed that a majority of Japanese university students (55.9%) believe that their English education was not useful (Hirai, 2014), with a claim that "the Japanese education system lacks teaching students how to use English in their daily lives and business scenarios" (para. 18). This lack of relevance is exacerbated by low achievement in standardized English testing. Despite the financial woes that have plagued the country since the economic bubble burst in the 1980s, Japan continues to spend a significant amount of capital on the acquisition of English language skills. Because of this investment, one might expect a population proficient in the L2; however, Japan has produced disappointing results. When compared to the rest of the non-English-speaking world in proficiency tests such as the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), Japan scores relatively low (The TOEIC Test, 2012). While there are some indications that performance in these standardized language tests is improving, Japan still ranks as only "moderately proficient" in English use (EF Education First 2013, p. 6). Considering that the Japanese education system has valued test-taking preparation for more than 100 years (Fujimoto-Adamson, 2006), the evaluation of L2 proficiency continues through tests such as the TOEIC, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and *Jitsuyō Eigo Ginō Kentei* (EIKEN), despite the criticism that they do not focus on practical language skills (Kubota, 2011). In Japan, research identifies a weak association between the target L2 group and one's future (Miyahara, Namoto, Yamanaka, Murakami, Kinoshita and Yamamoto, 1997). This is a concern for stakeholders, as it complicates assimilation of the international dimension (Knight, 2004) and discourages desire to acquire the international L2 skills needed to compete in the global job market (Yonezawa, 2010).

A unique feature of the Japanese higher education experience is the process of finding post-graduate employment, which is a rigid system that has been in place for decades. It involves information sessions hosted by employers, lengthy application processes, and multiple interview stages. Occurring over the course of a student's final two years of study, it is often perceived as an obligation, and one that students express fear of missing or delaying (Okano, 2009). The official job-hunting process begins during the third year of a student's four-year degree and can continue until graduation. If students are concerned with being on campus for the duration of the process, then this significantly limits one's window of opportunity to study abroad. The perception of job hunting

as critical to one's future is influenced by the tendency and tradition for Japanese people to seek lifetime employment, that is, dedication to a single company for one's entire working career. This is becoming less of a promise that companies can deliver on, due to the current economic conditions (JICA, 2011; Mouer, 2009; Kato, 2001).

Study Abroad Intent and Self-Selection in Japan

In recent years, elite (i.e. higher ranking) Japanese universities have expanded their opportunities for students to go abroad with the help of government funding. Funding has been received through programs including Global 30 and Top Global Universities, which share the common goal of exposing foreign culture to Japanese students, while promoting more destination institutions and flexible programs to those who want to study abroad.

Global 30 was introduced in 2009 under the premise that Japan's HEIs are falling behind in global university competitiveness, especially compared to the emerging regional economic powers of China and South Korea. The program goal is for selected Japanese universities to offer programs that will attract a total of 300,000 foreign students, while sending at least 120,000 abroad by 2020 (Global 30, 2012). The current Top Global Universities project will run for 10 years (from 2014) and aims at placing 10 Japanese HEIs in the list of 100 best universities in the world. Recent manifestations of these programs have resulted in more foreign faculty members and an increasing number of foreign exchange students on Japanese campuses; endorsed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who claimed that "the number of foreign students at a university will define its success" (Ince, 2014, para. 2). Some see these strategies as a superficial way of becoming internationalized, while others defend them as opportunities for domestic students to gain more exposure to the ideas, culture, and beliefs of visitors from abroad (Chapple, 2014; Maruko, 2014).

In the literature, foreign exchange students have been defined as a self-selecting group (Cushner and Karim, 2004; Daly, 2011), and research conducted outside of Japan has identified self-selecting students as more social, predominantly female, and curious about foreign countries and cultures (Daly, 2011; Luo and Jamieson-Drake, 2015; Salisbury, Paulsen, and Pascarella, 2011; Stroud, 2010). Stroud (2010) also found a relationship between self-selection and living more than 100 miles from home. While it has been determined that students enrolled in the liberal arts are more likely to study abroad (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, and Pascarella, 2009), these fields tend to have flexible graduation requirements, thus conducive to lengthy student mobility commitments (Goldstein and Kim, 2006). Furthermore, exchange students have a history of being well traveled (Brooks and Waters, 2009; Daly, 2011) with fewer financial restrictions (Whatley, 2017), and a desire for individual growth (Pope, Sánchez, Lehnert, and Schmid, 2014; Twombly, Salisbury, Tumanut, and Klute, 2012). Relyea, Cocchiara, and Studdard align student mobility with "high risk propensity" and career value (2008, p. 346). Study abroad self-selection is discussed throughout this paper as a student who is particularly inclined to participate in student mobility opportunities (Daly, 2011).

In the Japanese context, discussions on study abroad intent have been limited to perceptions of the activity, such as barriers and benefits (Asaoka and Yano, 2009; Lassegard, 2013). A study defining the qualities of Japanese students with strong intent to study abroad has yet to be conducted, therefore this paper aims to address this gap. In recognizing that Japan is a starkly different context, compared to multicultural societies that have been the focus of past self-selection studies (i.e. America, Australia, Western Europe), self-selection qualities amongst Japanese students could differ from those defined in the literature. A better understanding of Japanese students and their willingness to study abroad could potentially help HEIs meet their student mobility participation objectives, while allowing L2 educators to develop curriculum to include intercultural elements that will benefit learners.

Methodology

To better understand the decision-making process of students, the authors utilized Ajzen's (1985, 1991) theory of planned behavior as the primary theoretical model. Often used in social psychology to determine consciously intended behaviors – including study abroad intent – this model was used alongside L2 acquisition models (Dörnyei, 2005; Gardner, 2010), which reflect the inherent nature of studying abroad involving an L2 for all Japanese participants. Mixed methods were employed, not only because of the weaknesses of single-method designs, but on account of the applied pragmatic philosophical perspective. Some academics express skepticism in mixed method approaches (Snape and Spencer, 2003), although others argue that higher education problems involving new knowledge and power regimes call for such a design (Slaughter, 2001). Of the many variations of mixed method models, we adopted the *sequential explanatory design*, involving an initial quantitative survey to identify statistically significant and anomalous outcomes, followed by a secondary qualitative investigation to provide deeper insights into the survey results (Creswell, 2015). To draw the conclusions, presented later in this paper, a triangulation technique was adopted where multiple methods were sequentially performed in order to validate results. The first step in this process involved an analysis of the literature to identify possible qualities of students with strong intent to study abroad, both outside and within Japan. Second, findings from the literature were applied to questions in a quantitative survey, thus allowing for a comparison of results. Finally, results from the survey and literature were used to develop a qualitative line of questioning in order to better explain data deemed as particularly important, unexpected, and inconsistent.

Sample

Quantitative data were collected from students taking an elective four-skills language course (i.e. speaking, listening, reading, writing), called Intensive English. Students in the sample were beginning the second semester of their first year of higher education study. This group was targeted since they share common characteristics (e.g. age, nationality, interest in L2), while being enrolled in an early stage of the undergraduate experience (i.e. first year), which theoretically allows for the greatest window of opportunity to study abroad. Intensive English comprised of 30 classes with a total of 763 first-year students enrolled across various majors of study offered by the institution (i.e. humanities, sociology, law and politics, economics, business administration, and human welfare). It was believed that having a diverse mix of students from different majors and with varying English proficiency scores would allow for a more profound comparison, since a student's major has been identified as influencing intent to study abroad in the American context (Salisbury et al., 2009; Stroud, 2010). Table 1 shows the enrollment numbers of Intensive English based on the university's different majors, and those who participated in the study generally composed a representative sample, with most coming from Humanities, Business, and Sociology.

Table 1: Enrollment of Freshmen in Intensive English

School	Total enrollment	IE enrollment	% of total
Humanities	820	226	28
Sociology	670	140	21
Law and Politics	679	116	17
Economics	708	100	14
Business	608	154	25
Human Welfare	300	27	9
Total	**3816**	763	20

Note. IE = Intensive English

Mixed Methods

The sequential explanatory mixed methods design adopted for this investigation included an initial quantitative data collection phase, executed through a survey. Results from the survey were then analyzed before establishing the qualitative line of questioning through in-depth email discussions. This secondary qualitative phase was designed to add depth and understanding to the survey data.

The Quantitative Phase

Three hundred and eleven students satisfied the selection criteria and completed the survey (see Table 2). The survey contained five multi-scale questions related to study abroad intent, such as "studying abroad during my time at university is a goal of mine" and "I intend to study abroad during my time at university". For these items, Cronbach's Alpha was computed in SPSS (ver. 23) at .95, which is considered as excellent internal consistency reliability (Kline, 1999; Plonsky and Derrick, 2016). Using this data, 69 students were defined as having particularly strong intent, 66 had weak intent, and 176 students composed a group with an intermediate degree of intent. Other questions in the survey included validated items, aimed to determine qualities of the participants (Bandyopadhyay and Bandyopadhyay, 2015; Kasravi, 2009; Stroud, 2010). Some original, simple, single-item questions were also integrated into the survey instrument that addressed unique Japanese phenomena, such as desire for lifetime employment and intention to engage in the job hunting process.

Table 2: Respondent Numbers – Quantitative Phase

Groups	Total *N*	Gender	Ratio
All respondents	311	221F, 90M	71:29
Strong intent	69	48F, 21M	70:30
Weak intent	66	44F, 22M	67:33
Intermediate intent	176	129F, 47M	73:27

Note. *N* = number; F = female; M = male

Yashima's (2009) *international posture* instrument was integrated into the survey, which measures the degree to which someone sees him or herself as belonging to the international community, instead of one specific L2 group. It seizes both integrative and instrumental aspects of motivation and is specifically designed for contexts that may lack authentic cross-cultural contact with speakers of the target L2 or culture. Validated and applied primarily to Japanese higher education contexts, international posture is an attitudinal variable that can be potentially influential on study abroad intent. After establishing the strong and weak intent groups, the authors used SPSS to see whether there were significant differences in international posture between them. The internal consistency of Yashima's (2009) 28-item instrument (alpha = .89) was measured, and data from the 311 complete survey responses were processed to determine correlation between intent and the five individual variables composing international posture: approach avoidance tendency (seven items), interest in international vocation (six items), interest in foreign affairs (four items), ethnocentrism (five items), and willingness to communicate to the world (six items). Finally, a MANOVA (i.e. univariate analysis on multiple dependent variables) was employed to ascertain whether there was a difference in overall international posture between the strong and weak groups.

The Qualitative Phase

In the final question of the quantitative survey, respondents were asked if they would be willing to join the second phase of the study: the qualitative email questionnaire. After all willing participants

from the strong and weak groups were contacted, six strong group members and four weak group members confirmed their participation. While not an ideal number to ensure saturation of qualitative data, it is recognized that studies involving multiple methods and in-depth interviews – such as this one – require few qualitative participants (Lee, Woo and Mackenzie, 2002). Furthermore, a homogenous sample comprising Japanese students of similar demographic backgrounds would require fewer participants in order to be "sufficient to enable development of meaningful themes and useful interpretations" (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006, p. 78). Since all willing students who represented both strong intent and weak intent groups were contacted, this group of 10 email questionnaire participants represents a purposive, nested sample since they embody specific qualities being sought for this study (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). This approach of *extreme case sampling* in mixed methods has been done in situations where the researchers are concerned with collecting qualitative data only from those who exhibit polarizing qualities, and it is understood that participants who are both qualified and willing may be few (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007; Way, Stauber, Nakkula and London, 1994). Ongoing email discussion was chosen in lieu of face-to-face interviews or focus groups due to the language restrictions and inconsistencies of both students and researchers. All data (quantitative and qualitative) were collected in Japanese and later translated by a professional translator. The remote email approach was also adopted to maintain respondent anonymity and to ensure that responses were not influenced by location, bias, and power differences (Cohen et al., 2011).

Qualitative questions were conceived based on the survey results and the study's theoretical framework to help explain and rationalize the survey results deemed as important, unexpected, or inconsistent. Respondents were presented with open-ended questions via email to generate greater insight into the survey data. For example, the survey revealed that "increased maturity and social confidence" was the top perceived benefit of study abroad, even more so than L2 improvements and learning about foreign culture. Since this perceived benefit has never been considered in prior Japanese studies examining study abroad intent, qualitative participants were asked "How can study abroad increase maturity and social confidence? Give some specific examples". Respondents were sometimes contacted numerous times to ensure accuracy and clarity in their responses.

To achieve the objective of using the qualitative data to refine and explain the quantitative results, I conducted thematic analysis of the email responses through the lens of the theoretical framework and accompanying L2 acquisition models. Thematic analysis is a qualitative analytical method used to identify and analyze themes, or patterns of meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is often applied to single method qualitative research; however, it is found in other mixed method studies (Trahan and Stewart, 2013). Due to the explanatory sequential design of the current study, where questions were conceived based on quantitative results, participants of the qualitative phase were asked to provide rich descriptions of specific phenomena related to study abroad intent. Analysis of the qualitative data was then conducted in a theoretical, deductive, or "top down" way, where codes and themes were derived from the philosophical and theoretical framework. For instance, the elements of Dörnyei's (2005) three pronged framework - *Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self* and *L2 Learning Experience* – were used as themes in comparing strong and weak intent students. Several studies have verified this framework as valid (Csizér and Kormos, 2009; Ryan, 2009), including in different cultural contexts, such as Japan (Taguchi, Magid and Papi, 2009).

Study Abroad Self-Selection Qualities in the Japanese Context

From triangulating the literature, quantitative data, and qualitative data, the authors identified six common qualities of Japanese students with strong intent to study abroad. The qualities were established based on consistent findings across all three data sets, and for the six qualities below, exemplars from the data are provided. The authors consider Japanese students who embody all (or most) of the six qualities as self-selecting, or particularly inclined to enroll in student mobility opportunities. Based on our data, students described as self-selecting into study abroad:

(1) have greater achievement in English-proficiency testing;
(2) have prior international experience and have had successful, authentic cross-cultural interactions, both domestically and abroad;
(3) can connect purpose, meaning, and goal-directed behavior with the study abroad experience;
(4) have a greater tendency to see study abroad barriers as surmountable;
(5) are more willing to delay job hunting activity and not as determined to pursue lifetime employment; and
(6) have a significantly greater degree of international posture. These qualities are discussed in more detail here:

Achievement in English-Proficiency Testing

The data in this study indicate that Japanese students with strong intent to study abroad have, on average, better achievement on TOEIC. All students from the sample were required to take the TOEIC before being placed in an Intensive English class, so the scores were self-reported in the survey. 30.4% of strong intent students had a TOEIC score of over 651, compared to only 15.2% of students with weak intent. Furthermore, only 20.2% of strong intent students had a score lower than 500, compared to 27.3% of weak intent students. A discrepancy in the scores between strong and weak members can be expected since a number of destination institutions require a minimum level of achievement; however, opportunities do exist where even a student with a relatively low TOEIC score can get admittance into a short-term overseas program.

Prior International Experience and Authentic Cross-Cultural Interactions

Based on empirical data collected from two questions in the survey, we classified international experience as (a) the number of countries visited and (b) past involvement in study abroad. These items were adopted from Daly (2011) and Brooks and Waters (2009), who identified "a strong tendency for exchange students to be well-traveled" (Daly 2011, p. 63). In this investigation, students with weak intent were significantly more likely to have never been abroad – 37.9% compared to 17.4% – while those with strong intent had a greater likelihood of visiting three or more countries – 37.7% to 22.8%. In the qualitative email questionnaire, one student from the strong intent group described a prior international experience as "a major turning point in my life" and that it "extremely widened my perspective; however, I want to study abroad again to broaden my horizons more than ever before" (personal communication, 2016). Other responses associated "international experience" not only with overseas trips, but also domestic engagement with foreign people. In multiple cases, such domestic cross-cultural interactions affected the students' study abroad intent. For example, one student claimed "I want to study abroad so I can meet my American friend who was an exchange student here in Japan" (personal communication, 2016).

Purpose and Meaning Connected to International Experience

Study abroad participation has been connected to goal-directed behavior stemming from major of study, personal development, and future employment ambitions (Pope et al., 2014; Relyea et al., 2008; Salisbury et al., 2009). In the current study, students with strong intent to study abroad had more international experience, but the survey results alone did not reveal the motivational impact of past international experience and cross-cultural contact. The email questionnaire results yielded numerous associations between purpose and desire to study abroad amongst those with strong intent, while responses from those with weak intent were devoid of such connections. In examining these inclinations through the lens of the literature, we agree that study abroad participants have clear goals and desired learning outcomes aligned with the destination country and institution (Twombly et al., 2012). To illustrate this, one participant from our study was a British Literature major

with strong intent to study abroad in the United Kingdom because she could "get better access to materials and academics" related to her field (personal communication, 2016).

Perceptions of Barriers to Study Abroad

In this study's quantitative component, respondents were asked to evaluate the extent, from *strongly agree* (6) to *strongly disagree* (1), to which different barriers were a deterrent to study abroad participation. While the rankings of barriers were relatively consistent between strong and weak intent members; the overall weighted average score for each barrier was significantly lower for those with strong intent (see Table 3). In other words, it appears that weak intent members generally view barriers to study abroad as more challenging to overcome. In terms of deviations from the mean, the strong intent group exhibited more variation in responses, which could be caused by a small proportion of strong intent students with minimal barriers due to extensive prior experience and more favorable socio-economic conditions. When asked to elaborate on perceived barriers in the qualitative component, members from both strong and weak groups identified similar issues (financial, safety, etc.); however, the strong members provided solutions and methods to overcome them (i.e. detour behavior). For instance, one student with strong intent explained that "I can minimize the financial problem if I work a part-time job" (personal communication, 2016). In all cases, weak members simply stated the barriers without offering possible solutions.

Table 3*:* Weighted Averages of Perceived Study Abroad Deterrents

Perceived Deterrents	Total (*N*=311)		Strong (*N*=69)		Weak (*N*=66)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Financial issues	4.50	1.53	4.14	1.69	4.58	1.37
Low L2 ability	4.06	1.43	3.64	1.51	4.29	1.3
Troublesome application process	3.88	1.45	3.53	1.77	4.31	1.09
Insufficient grades	3.88	1.4	3.64	1.56	3.89	1.16
Delayed graduation	3.88	1.45	3.41	1.54	4.09	1.23
Dangers and disease abroad	3.74	1.44	3.15	1.47	3.91	1.44
Would miss out on events	3.50	1.49	3.10	1.64	3.89	1.24
Homesickness	3.41	1.59	2.94	1.77	3.83	1.49
Not confidents in making friends	3.29	1.45	2.90	1.65	3.62	1.4
Travel abroad can be done post-grad	3.25	1.41	2.60	1.44	3.88	1.21
Hurt chances of finding good job	3.15	1.39	3.01	1.57	3.18	1.24
Lack of Japanese food	3.14	1.47	2.75	1.44	3.76	1.45
Friends / family would discourage	2.28	1.29	1.78	1.14	2.55	1.17

Note. M = mean / weighted average; SD = standard deviation

Job Hunting and Desire for Lifetime Employment

The job-hunting process in Japan is a rigid system that students often begin during their third year of study. It involves information sessions at HEIs hosted by employers, lengthy application processes, and multiple interview stages. The quantitative data revealed a greater tendency of students with strong intent to delay the job hunt until their fourth year (24.6% vs. 15.2%). This finding was validated through a cross-check with the survey item on ideal time to study abroad, which indicated that weak intent members consider second year as the most opportune time to study abroad, to a greater

degree than strong intent members (84.9% vs. 72.5%). The qualitative phase clarified that students who are more willing to delay the job-hunting process until their fourth year have an extended window of opportunity for study abroad, as one strong intent member claimed "I'm not in a big rush to find a job" (personal communication, 2016).

In Japan, lifetime employment has been described as a "celebrated practice" and is defined as one's dedication to a single company for his or her entire working career (Kato 2001, p. 490). A study in 2001 indicated no significant barriers to lifetime employment amongst those who desired it (Kato, 2001); however, research in 2013 identified a decline in mean tenure amongst workers in response to economic conditions (Kawaguchi and Ueno, 2013). Our survey data analysis revealed that weak intent members have a strong desire for lifetime employment, compared to those with strong intent (71.2% vs. 46.4%). In the qualitative phase, weak intent members associated lifetime employment with stability and security while raising concerns about studying abroad, since it potentially requires a period of time away from job hunting events. Strong intent members, on the other hand, exhibited more flexible attitudes about working for numerous employers, for example "I want to work for different international companies in different countries" (personal communication, 2016).

International Posture

The literature reveals that study abroad participation can result in greater international posture (Yashima and Zenuk-Nishide, 2008); however, there are no studies that investigate the association between international posture and intent to study abroad. To address this, a MANOVA test was conducted in SPSS. MANOVA tests are generally performed to determine whether there are differences between two independent groups on more than one continuous dependent variable. In this study, the two independent groups were the strong and weak intent students, and the continuous dependent variables were the five elements of international posture. Since this study involved only two independent groups, no additional post-hoc test was needed. Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics for international posture between the two groups, with mean values shown for the attitudinal variable as a whole, and its five elements. Again, deviations from the mean are greater for the strong intent group with mean values that are also greater across all variables. To determine significance of these values, a MANOVA was done.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for International Posture

Variable	Group	Mean	Std. Dev.	*N*
International Posture	Strong	118.0	17.5	69
	Weak	96.4	13.4	66
Approach-avoidance	Strong	33.2	4.8	69
	Weak	27.8	4.7	66
Interest international vocation	Strong	28.3	5.6	69
	Weak	24.2	5.1	66
Interest foreign affairs	Strong	16.7	3.8	69
	Weak	13.9	3.4	66
Ethnocentrism	Strong	17.0	4.1	69
	Weak	16.1	3.5	66
Willingness to communicate	Strong	22.8	6.0	69
	Weak	18.6	4.0	66

Note. Std. Dev. = standard deviation; *N* = number

In executing the MANOVA, the assumption of homogeneity of variance (as tested by Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variance and Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices) was not violated; therefore, Wilks' Lambda is reported for significant values. The Box's M value of 21.3252 was associated with a *p* value of 0.1548, which was interpreted as non-significant. Results of the MANOVA reveal a significant multivariate effect F (5, 129) = 18.68, *p*= <.0005 (alpha set at .05), Wilks' Lambda = .058, partial η^2 = .42, which indicates that there is a significant difference in international posture scores between the two groups, found in the direction of strong intent. In other words, the strong intent group has significantly higher international posture scores than the weak intent group, meaning that international posture has an influence on the students' intention to study abroad.

Given the significance of the overall test, differences in each dependent variable (i.e. univariate main effects) were examined and are presented in Table 5. Data in this table show that there are significant univariate effects (alpha set at .05) for approach-avoidance, F (1, 133) = 44.4, *p*= <.0005; interest in international vocation, F (1, 133) = 81.9, *p*= <.0005; interest in foreign affairs, F (1, 133) = 19.5, *p*=<.0005; willingness to communicate, F (1, 133) = 22.8, *p*= <.0005; and no significant effect for ethnocentrism F (1, 133) = 1.9, *p*=.17. Therefore, the strong intent group has significantly higher scores than the weak intent group in international posture as a whole.

Table 5: **Univariate Test Results**

	F	*df*	*Sig.*	η^2
International posture				
Approach-avoidance	44.4	1	.00	.25
Interest international vocation	81.9	1	.00	.38
Interest foreign affairs	19.5	1	.00	.13
Ethnocentrism	1.9	1	.17	.01
Willingness to communicate	22.8	1	.00	.15

Note. *df* = degrees of freedom; *Sig*. = significance; η^2 = eta squared

Discussion and Implications

Applying Self-Selection to East Asian Contexts

In comparing the results of this study to those in the literature, similarities and differences were discovered, as well as findings particular to the Japanese context. Our results diverged with those of prior studies since there were no significant differences in our sample related to gender and study abroad intent, as both males and females represented similar proportions of strong and weak intent members. Also, while Stroud (2010) identified a correlation between study abroad participation and living more than 100 miles from home, this relationship is difficult to apply in the Japanese context since most Japanese university students tend to live with their respective families. In the current study, nearly 80% of both strong and weak intent students lived with their families (79.7% vs. 77.3% respectively), and there were no significant differences amongst the few students who lived away from home. With research participants attending a liberal arts university, it was also difficult to establish relationships between study abroad intent and field of study. As a predominantly ethnically homogenous nation, Japanese higher education learning environments often lack opportunities to engage in authentic cross-cultural interactions, which would not be the case in countries where most of the research has originated (i.e. America, Australia, Western Europe). Despite this difference, both the current study and those in the literature identify exposure to other cultures, and interactions with people of diverse backgrounds, as a determinant of study abroad

participation. As an additional similarity, students in this study also site financial restrictions as the top barrier to study abroad participation.

Because of the unique cultural and geographic profile of Japan, several findings emerged that would not usually apply to a Western context. The first is the role of achievement in the L2, in this case, the TOEIC results. Study abroad for Japanese students inherently involves an L2 element (often English), so students are required to have some proficiency in the target language, where this is not always necessary for sojourners from other countries. Also, the uniquely Japanese tradition of job hunting, as well as the desire and expectation of lifetime employment make this an unparalleled finding in the field of study abroad intent.

This study's sample comprised of students from only one HEI; however, the six qualities of students with particularly strong intent to study abroad can be generalized and applied to higher education students across Japan. Being 98.5% Japanese (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017), Japan is one of the most ethnically homogenous countries in the world, and theoretically, the student profile of the institution under investigation would be similar to other domestic universities. For instance, all students involved were first year, Japanese, enrolled in a number of different faculties (humanities, business, etc.), and had varying TOEIC scores. Also, both males and females were represented and there were differing degrees of academic achievement (based on grade-point average). In short, the sample seems to represent a group of typical first-year Japanese students enrolled in an English program. When conducting a more in-depth evaluation of the student profiles involved in this research, certain qualities of the overall sample cast doubt on the potential for precise generalizability with other Japanese institutions. The sample could represent "typical" higher education students of English, but they may have L2 abilities, and possibly cross-cultural experiences, that would exceed those of university students who are not interested or enrolled in elective English classes.

The stated definition of self-selection, or a derivative of it, could be applied to other global contexts, especially East Asian countries. China, South Korea, and Japan are Confucian culture heritage countries, meaning they are collectivist societies with roots in Confucian thought (Phong-Mai, Terlouw and Pilot, 2005). Although there are differences in how collectivistic traits manifest in greater society, traits and attitudes towards educational experiences are often shared. For instance, higher education students in Hong Kong and South Korea report more financial and social support than those in Germany and the USA, and like Japan, students in these East Asian contexts tend to live with their families while studying (Fingerman, Cheng, Kim, Fung, Han, Lang and Wagner, 2014). Some aspects of the Japanese self-selection criteria (e.g. lifetime employment and job-hunting traditions) may not be germane to other regional contexts, but literature indicates congruency in variables that could impact study abroad intent. In terms of subjective norms, Chinese students "can never separate themselves from obligation to others" (Wen and Clément 2003, p. 20) resulting in a similar dynamic to Japanese students, where they do not want to risk making mistakes in front of peers. Other studies determine barriers to study abroad (i.e. family, financial, psychological, and social) as being similar in China and Japan (Sánchez, Fornerino, Zhang, 2006). Also in the Chinese context, Ulu, Weiwei and Yu (2015) establish a relationship between international posture and intercultural willingness to communicate, which has been aligned with study abroad intent.

Having a more profound understanding of students with strong study abroad intent has implications for study abroad program developers, recruitment departments, and individual educators. For educators and other higher education stakeholders, the question should be asked of whether the six qualities of students with strong intent, as defined in this paper, can be assimilated in the classroom. If this can be achieved, then study abroad participation could increase.

Fostering Qualities of Students with Strong Intent to Study Abroad

Based on the outcomes of this study, we feel that several qualities of students with strong intent to study abroad can be fostered in the L2 classroom. First, a common goal of L2 classes is to improve

language proficiency for the purpose of achieving higher scores on standardized tests, such as the TOEIC. With studies correlating exposure to authentic input and development of target language skills (Ahmed, 2017), an L2 instructor can integrate material that will develop skills necessary for success in English proficiency tests. Second, instructors can create opportunities in the L2 classroom for authentic cross-cultural interactions by inviting foreign exchange students or guest speakers to the class (Aubrey, 2017; Wang and Nowlan, 2011), thus satisfying the quality of strong intent students as having more international experience, even if it occurs within Japan. These cross-cultural encounters are ideal for challenging students' biases and pre-conceived notions about otherness, and the instructor can provide follow-up opportunities to reframe perceptions through self-reflection. Third, L2 instructors can implement lessons that will give students greater purpose and meaning to study abroad, while diminishing perceived barriers. Through administration of a needs analysis at the beginning of the semester, the instructor can develop international material that relates to common student interests and ambitions. Developing problem solving skills and detour behavior through topics of interest can help students think more critically about overcoming barriers to study abroad participation. Finally, if students can begin to understand the possible positive impact of study abroad on future careers, both from the perspective of the educator and the employer, then greater interest and acceptance of international posture elements could manifest, for instance, greater interest in international vocation and issues.

For students without the means to join sojourns overseas, we hope that domestic L2 curriculum will allow students to assimilate some of the qualities of students with strong intent to study abroad, such as purpose, meaning, international posture, and other intercultural competences. This may seem difficult to realize in an ethnically homogenous country such as Japan; however, studies have indicated that domestic cross-cultural training can yield some of the same benefits as actual sojourns overseas (Jon, 2013; Soria and Troisi, 2013; Yashima and Zenuk-Nishide, 2008). If stakeholders such as departmental heads and language instructors can succeed in creating more intercultural experiences, then this could further increase the likelihood of fostering the six qualities of students with strong intent to study abroad.

Conclusion

The decreasing number of Japanese students studying overseas has caused alarm for higher education stakeholders, since participation is often considered as an indicator of overall institutional prestige. To generate knowledge that can help reverse this undesirable trend, the current study addresses a critical gap in the literature by providing the qualities of Japanese students who have strong intent to study abroad, that is, they 1) perform better on standardized L2 tests, 2) have more cross-cultural experience, 3) align purpose and meaning to international experience, 4) perceive barriers to study abroad as surmountable, 5) have more flexible views on job hunting and lifetime employment, and 6) have greater international posture. Since it is posited that Japanese students with strong intent are more likely to engage in overseas sojourns; educators and administrators can develop action plans to foster the aforementioned qualities at HEIs, and specifically, the L2 classroom. Through integration of more cross-cultural and international content in L2 programs, students can develop L2 and cultural skills that may lead to increased participation in study abroad.

The participants of this study were first-year Japanese students from one region of the country; however, results could apply to the greater Japanese context as well as other regions in the Asia-Pacific region. To more firmly establish this, cross-cultural comparative research could be conducted to determine similarities and differences between self-selection qualities of university students in other countries of the Asia Pacific region. Another future direction of this study involves a longitudinal approach to determine if intent to study abroad results in actual participation. Also, the researchers intend to empirically establish whether an internationalized L2 curriculum can foster the six qualities outlined in this paper, and if that leads to increasing study abroad intent and participation.

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Achieving Change in Student Assessment Policies and Practices: A Pressing Challenge for Vietnam's Higher Education System

Luong Thi Hong Gam[a]
Thu Dau Mot University
Sharon Parry
Southern Cross University
Martin Hayden
Southern Cross University

Abstract: *Within Vietnam's higher education system, traditional norm-referenced approaches to student assessment continue to be widely adopted. Though the system is progressively being reformed with a view to achieving comparability with leading higher education systems globally, student assessment policies and practices have so far proven to be resistant to change. This article addresses the challenge of achieving change in these policies and practices. It is informed by an ethnographic investigation of experiences with student assessment for a selected sample group of academic staff members at three significant teacher training universities in Vietnam. A framework for achieving change is proposed in light of these experiences and having regard to insights from the relevant conceptual literature.*

Keywords*: higher education, student assessment, formative assessment, educational change, teacher training institutions, Vietnam*

Introduction

The quality of student assessment is pivotal to the quality of a higher education system. As Rowntree (1977, p. 1) perceptively observed: "If we wish to discover the truth about an educational system, we must look into its [student] assessment procedures." In Vietnam, higher education institutions continue predominantly to adopt traditional student assessment practices (Nguyen Thi Hong Tham, 2013; Tran Thi Tuyet, 2013, 2015; Ho Thi Nhat, 2015). These practices are driven by a perceived need to rank cohorts of students in terms of their academic performance, usually by requiring them to undertake stressful summative tests and examinations.

Most developed higher education systems have moved beyond these practices. A significant influence in this regard has been research which began to be reported in the early 1980s concerning the extent to which students adopt different approaches to learning in response to different approaches to student assessment (see, for example, Marton, Hounsell and Entwistle, 1984; Biggs and Collis, 1982). Norm-referenced approaches to student assessment, that is, using assessment processes largely or solely for the purposes of ranking students in terms of their relative performance on summative tests and examinations, have been shown to contribute to surface forms of learning, as distinct from learning focused upon achieving a deep understanding of curriculum content and a strong sense of personal engagement with the learning process (Biggs and Tang, 2007, p. 22). Norm-referenced approaches have also been shown to contribute to the perpetuation of entrenched social and educational inequities (Morgan, Dunn, Parry and O'Reilly, 2004, pp. 22-24).

[a] **Correspondence can be directed to:** gamlth@tdmu.edu.vn

A popular alternative to norm-referenced student assessment is a standards-based approach. Standards-based student assessment requires students to be informed in advance about the standards of attainment associated with different grade levels of achievement in a unit of study (Morgan et al., 2004, pp. 26-29). Student assessment is then focused upon providing the students with opportunities to demonstrate the extent of their success in attaining these standards. This approach to student assessment is highly conducive to the adoption of formative assessment procedures, whereby student achievements are assessed for the purposes of providing feedback to students about their progress with learning. Formative assessment, which encourages a much greater reliance upon self-directed approaches to learning, has been convincingly shown by Black and Wiliam (1998a, 1998b) to contribute to the quality of student learning to a far greater extent than does summative assessment.

Vietnam's slowness in adopting an alternative to summative and norm-referenced approaches to student assessment has been the subject of ongoing discussion in the scholarly literature on teaching and learning in Vietnam. A likely explanation is that most lecturers, academic managers and government officials are relatively unfamiliar with anything other than summative examinations and norm-referencing (Institute for Educational Research, 2005; Ho Thi Nhat, 2015; Luong, 2016). It is also likely that there are limited opportunities available in Vietnam for lecturers and academic managers to discuss alternatives to summative assessment and norm-referencing because there are relatively limited opportunities of participation in professional development programs where different approaches to students assessment might be freely discussed and debated (Nguyen Thi Hong Tham, 2013). Higher education lecturers are also very poorly paid and often need to supplement their income by engaging in extra teaching duties, which leave little time for engaging in innovation with teaching and student assessment (Le Thi Kim Anh and Hayden, 2017).

This paper addresses the question of how to achieve change in the policies and practices applying to student assessment in Vietnam's higher education system. Its specific purpose is to identify the conditions needing to be addressed for the purposes of introducing more contemporary approaches to student assessment. This topic is important because not only is the norm-referenced student assessment culture in Vietnam becoming increasingly anachronistic by world standards, but it is also a culture which gives rise to excessively high levels of student stress and, potentially, unfair grading practices.

In recognition of the extent of the stress imposed on students by end-of-unit summative examinations, Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in 2007 issued a directive (MOET, 2007) requiring the introduction of continuous assessment processes within units of study. This directive did not, however, address the underlying problem of the system's preoccupation with summative assessment and norm-referencing. The directive achieved little more than to increase the number of summative assessment tasks having to be completed by students while completing a unit of study.

How to Achieve Educational Change

There is a substantial body of literature available about the nature of and pre-conditions for educational change. Fullan's (2001) theory of educational change, which gives expression to ideas based upon complexity theory, tends to dominate this literature. The following account begins with a brief overview of complexity theory, and then introduces key propositions from Fullan's theory.

Complexity theory applies to social organisations. These organisations are conceptualised as being in a state of continuous change, driven by forces from within as well as from outside the organisation. These forces derive from interactions occurring within and between organisations as individuals and groups, referred to as agents, seek to achieve their personal goals while at the same time contributing to the organisation's need to achieve its goals (Stacey, 1995; 1996; 2007; Tosey, 2002). Certain principles and rules, termed schemas, impose a measure of orderliness on the nature of these interactions, but these schemas may be transformed if the prevailing culture of either the

organisation itself or the organisation's external environment undergoes change. Change involves, therefore, the emergence of new schemas which in turn affect patterns of behaviour within the organisation. The process whereby schemas are transformed is said to be relatively unpredictable in nature and to seldom occur in a linear manner. According to complexity theory, achieving change in the prevailing schema concerning student assessment would involve the application of pressure from within or from outside the organisation to achieve the adoption of new patterns of behaviour concerning student assessment. Until all agents in the organisation have accepted the overall value of the new schema, enduring change cannot be said to have occurred.

Drawing on complexity theory, Fullan (2001, p. 44) argued that meaningful educational change required 'reculturing', a process which he said involved challenging people's beliefs, values and ways of thinking with a view to advancing better-informed practices. He argued (2007, pp. 88-9) that significant cultural change was more likely to occur in circumstances where the need for change was clearly understood, and where the individuals concerned were well informed about how it could be achieved.

Educational change, in his view, also required a certain kind of leadership. Leaders of change had to be 'context setters' (Fullan, 2001, pp. 112-115), capable of explaining the need for change and of guiding members of a community through the processes of change. Fullan referred to these leaders as needing to have "change knowledge", defined as "understanding and insight about the process of change and the key drivers" (Fullan et al., 2005, p. 54-8). These drivers were identified as including a moral purpose; a transparent and coherent change process; and a culture of progressive evaluation towards achieving outcomes.

Fullan's theory resonates in many respects with Lave and Wenger's (1991) view of educational organisations as socio-semiotic communities of practice within which meanings are constructed by community members through interaction with one another. Wenger (1998a, p. 45) described communities of practice as social groupings "created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise". Engaging in these communities was said to enable members to exchange both explicit and tacit knowledge related to their shared enterprise, and to learn from these exchanges, thereby providing the foundations for the development of a capacity for future change (see also Wenger, 1998a; Wenger and Snyder, 2000; Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002).

Methodology

To obtain empirical insights regarding the existing state of change in the culture of student assessment in Vietnam's higher education system, in-depth interviews were conducted with a selected sample group of academic staff members from across three significant teacher training universities. Teacher training universities are highly influential in Vietnam in terms of their influence on approaches to teaching and learning across the higher education system. The three site institutions included one each in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), and one located on the outskirts of HCMC.

The investigation was implemented following the precepts of *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which requires that data should be collected and analysed in tandem using ethnographic techniques and in a way which does not intrude on the natural setting of the participants. In addition, *Naturalistic Inquiry* holds strongly to a view that findings generated in this way must be trustworthy, and it proposes various methods for assuring this trustworthiness.

The participants in the investigation were selected by means of a 'snowball' sampling procedure, as described by Patton (2002, p. 237). To initiate the process, several lecturers known to one of the authors to be highly experienced with student assessment practices and to be open-minded about the need for assessment reform were selected from across each of the three site institutions. These participants then nominated colleagues who were also experienced with student assessment and who might be interesting to interview from the point of view of learning about pressures for the reform of student assessment practices within the higher education system.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 24 participants before data saturation and redundancy began to increase. These participants were nearly all interviewed several times. They were also observed at length in the settings in which they worked. The interviews were guided by Spradley's (1979) account of the nature of ethnographic interviewing. The interview schedule (see Appendix A) included nine leading questions, each addressing a different aspect of the culture of student assessment at whichever of the three site institutions was concerned. These questions probed the beliefs, values and attitudes of the participants regarding student assessment. The interviews were conducted in Vietnamese by one of the authors. There was in addition a vigorous examination conducted of relevant documentary sources, including course outlines, current assessment tasks and relevant institutional student assessment policies.

Thematic analysis of the interview data using Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method was employed to identify emergent themes. The software package, Nvivo*9, assisted with data management and retrieval.

Trustworthiness, which was a vital element in the research design, was achieved by implementing specific strategies recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 301), including multiple types of triangulation, prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, member checking, 'thick' description, the use of a reflexive journal, and the execution of an audit trail, which was checked and verified by an independent auditor. Before conducting the interviews, all participants were informed that the data collected would be handled confidentially, and that pseudonyms would be employed when reporting the findings.

Findings

From the large volume of data collected, three categories of participants could be readily identified. The participants in two of these categories, accounting for 21 of the 24 participants, were, as expected, clearly reform-minded with respect student assessment policies and practices. However, three other participants were not at all reform-minded, and argued strongly for the retention of norm-referencing. Given that it had been anticipated that all participants selected would be open to reform regarding student assessment in Vietnam's higher education system, it was surprising that these three participants were identified. Instead of excluding them from the data set, they were included, thereby providing a sample sub-group which yielded valuable insights regarding the beliefs, values and attitudes of academic staff members in Vietnam who were committed to a continuing reliance upon summative examinations and norm-referencing in determining grade levels for student performance in units of study.

Three distinct categories of participants were identified from the findings and are labelled as Adaptive Implementers (8 participants), Changing Pragmatists (13 participants) and Defending Denialists (3 participants). The defining features of these three categories are now reported.

Adaptive Implementers

The eight participants who were Adaptive Implementers not only believed in the need to break away from norm-referenced assessment but were also responsible for having introduced formative assessment tasks in the units for which they were responsible. One of these participants reported how, for example:

> I make comments on the overall quality of the students' work, what they need to improve, and I provide suggestions for improvement. Each group is then required to reflect on their learning and to adjust their projects based on feedback provided. (Hong)

Another reported that:

> To encourage students in asking questions and sharing their ideas, I [encourage] group discussions, and then each group presents its results. After each group finishes its presentation, I require other groups to ask questions. Finally, I provide each group with constructive feedback. (Huyen)

Implicit here was a belief that student learning became qualitatively richer when students were required to learn from constructive feedback, and when they were required to engage with learning materials by asking questions and by sharing points of view. This belief was widely shared among the Adaptive Implementers.

The Adaptive Implementers routinely implemented formative assessment practices on a purely voluntary basis, with no formal or departmental recognition, or time allocation, provided for what they were doing. They reported, however, that their colleagues were generally respectful of what they were doing. From their point of view, though, the culture in which they worked was dominated by summative and norm-referenced approaches to student assessment, and they knew well that when submitting final grades for their students they were also required to arrive at a distribution of grades that would correspond with acceptable norms within their faculties.

They expressed a great deal of frustration that MOET, having sensibly decided in 2007 to require that end-of-unit examinations should not be solely relied upon to determine final grades in units, had made no further policy progress in terms of modernising higher education student assessment policies and practices in Vietnam. One of the participants stated, for example:

> It is nearly ten years since the [MoET] Decisions were issued. There has been no follow-up to see what more needs to be done, no evaluation, and no sense of seeing how assessment has evolved or developed. Thus, change happens only at the level of the individual lecturer. (Hong)

Implementing formative assessment procedures was uniformly reported by the Adaptive Implementers to require more time than did the conduct of summative assessment procedures. For this reason alone, it was said to be difficult to persuade colleagues to engage more with formative approaches to student assessment. One of the Adaptive Implementers, who was an academic manager, explained the difficulty he had in persuading more of his colleagues to adopt formative assessment:

> . . . because of the low salary and the shortage of financial incentives, whenever I raise this issue [of implementing formative assessment], my staff always ask me 'will we be paid [more] for doing this job?' So I am only able to encourage those who are interested and enthusiastic in making change [by themselves]. (Luc)

He considered that, in general, MOET appeared to have little interest in encouraging more experimentation with approaches to student assessment, and individual higher education institutions also showed little interest improving the quality of student assessment practices. It was of concern to him that individual lecturers who were experimenting with more enlightened approaches to student assessment were being left to do so at high personal cost because they were foregoing opportunities to earn additional income by taking on extra teaching duties.

Changing Pragmatists

The 13 Changing Pragmatists also argued for the need to break away from a reliance on summative examinations and norm-referencing, but mostly they had not done so consistently or effectively because they regarded the obstacles to making this change as being too onerous. For some of these participants, there was a realisation that formative student assessment required more time

to implement, and they felt that they did not have any spare time, given the pressure on them to supplement their incomes by doing additional teaching. A typical comment was:

> I teach an average of 16 to 20 hours per week. There are also too many students in a classroom [50 to 60 students], and the training curriculum is heavy in theoretical knowledge. . .. I should [be carefully providing] students with timely feedback on their performance. However, with these constraints, I am unable to carry out this function well. (My)

Low salaries were referred to by nearly all of these participants as leaving them with no time for anything other than the routine use of summative tests and examinations. As another Changing Pragmatist explained:

> The payment for one teaching period is approximately 50,000 to 60,000 VND ($2.5 to $3 USD) per hour. If a teaching unit includes 30 teaching hours, I will receive about 1,500,000 VND ($75 USD). If I spend a great deal of time marking and providing formative feedback, I will need to sacrifice my other jobs. I regret that although I know the need to change my student assessment practices, I have not yet done as much as I would like. (Vuong)

Though genuinely concerned about the deficiencies they perceived in the dominant student assessment practices adopted at their university, the realities of life for them as academics were seen to render active engagement with formative assessment approaches to be completely impractical. A large proportion of these Changing Pragmatists referred to the tension between supporting their families and implementing sufficient formative assessment to encourage deep learning among their students.

More than one-half of the Changing Pragmatists also expressed a lack of confidence about using formative assessment. One explained, for example that: "I simply do not have enough understanding about [formative] student assessment" (Duyen). Others referred to a need for more professional development to assist them to understand better the nature of standards-based and formative assessment approaches. They expressed disappointment about the lack of professional development opportunities available to academic staff members generally. One participant reported, for example: "*During the past five years, I have had no opportunities to attend training courses [about student assessment]*" (Xuan). Those few who had attended training courses on student assessment reported that the insights obtained were not always welcomed within their departments. One participant explained, for example: "My head of department . . . neither encourages me to implement these practices nor to share them with my colleagues" (Vuong). This participant also reported that: "The educational leaders do not create an environment where lecturers . . . can share experiences and learn from each other. . .. There is a lack of professional dialogue amongst lecturers" (Vuong).

The context for this and many similar comments was a tacit understanding that the management culture in Vietnamese universities was 'top-down' in terms of the exercise of control. As one participant reported: "I see that the head of department and university leaders expect their staff to listen and implement their orders. Opposing ideas or opinions are often excluded" (Duyen). This situation meant that any significant institution-wide change to assessment policies and practices in Vietnam's higher education system were most unlikely to occur until sanctioned by senior university managers.

Defending Denialists

As noted earlier, the three Defending Denialists expressed a strong commitment to retaining summative examinations and norm-referencing. They regarded norm-referencing as a procedure which provided all stakeholders in university education with critical information about the academic performance of students relative to one another. Norm-referencing was also seen as being simple to

implement, particularly if members of staff made use of multiple-choice and short essay questions. Standardised multiple-choice tests appealed to them because, as one of the participants reported: "I use objective tests because I believe that I can assess all students fairly and comprehensively regarding all the knowledge that I transferred to my students [in classes]" (Tran). Another reported that he recognised the emotional pressure on students due to implementing only summative approaches to assessment, but he remained convinced of the effectiveness of summative examinations for assessing student abilities: "I agree [that] exams focus more on factual knowledge but I think examinations are necessary to sort out which students should not be doing that subject" (Quyet). Absent altogether among this sub-group was any concern about students' independent learning or problem-solving capacity.

Shifting a Culture

The Adaptive Implementers and Changing Pragmatists provided numerous suggestions for ways in which Vietnam's higher education system could be shifted from being dominated by a 'testing culture', as opposed to a 'learning culture' (Shepard, 2000, pp. 1-3). Implicit in many of these suggestions was a perceived need for a more informed leadership, nationally as well as institutionally. As one of the participants, who was himself an academic manager, stated:

> It is important for administrative leaders and academic managers at all management levels to understand the necessity of change towards formative assessment. More importantly, they should realise that change towards different purposes of student assessment is inevitable. (Luc)

A sense of the inevitability of change underscored many of the views expressed by both Adaptive Implementers and Changing Pragmatists. In general, they believed that the higher education system in Vietnam could not hold out for much longer in terms of its reliance on norm-referencing. Though in many cases unfamiliar with how alternative student assessment approaches, such as standards-based assessment, work, they considered that academic staff members in Vietnam needed to prepare for a time when norm-referencing as an approach to student assessment would be discarded as inequitable and prone to eliciting only surface approaches to learning, as Black and Wiliam (1998a, 1998b) identified. One of the Adaptive Implementers commented, for example:

> It is time for us to cooperate and develop our teaching and assessment activities together for the benefit of our students. That would be a good way to broaden the implementation of effective assessment. (Tuan)

In this vein, MOET was seen to be proceeding far too slowly with the provision of either a vision for the future of higher education student assessment practice and with the concomitant professional development needed by lecturers and academic managers.

There was also a widely shared view that universities needed to develop their own student assessment policies, and that they begin to do so by supporting lecturers and academic managers to develop the skills and understanding required for the adoption of new approaches to student assessment once they are approved by MOET. A representative argument was:

> University assessment policy should state all the requirements, and outline the procedures for different purposes of student assessment. This policy should also provide a coherent statement of what the institution is trying to achieve. (Trung)

This participant went on to explain that if an institution's assessment policy clearly articulated requirements for change, and if it provided well-informed guidelines for implementing change, then lecturers would be much more able to transition to a new approach to student assessment practice.

Changing the culture of student assessment was seen, however, as only one part of a much broader suite of changes required for the purposes of shifting the culture of higher education in Vietnam. The large majority of Adaptive Implementers and Changing Pragmatists reported feeling professionally constrained by their meagre salary levels, which necessitated the acceptance of extra teaching duties or outside work for the sake of supplementing family incomes. They also commented on the extent to which poor working conditions and the lack of adequate teaching resources were personally demotivating. One of these participants stated, for example:

> There must be a fundamental change in the support system for lecturers, such as reducing the amount of [emphasis on] theoretical knowledge and [changing the] overloaded curriculum [by] reducing the teaching hours and [improving the] student/lecturer ratio, and upgrading the teaching facilities, working conditions and the means for assessment. (Tien)

Another commented along similar lines:

> If sufficient salaries for lecturers are secured, lecturers [will] not have to struggle doing the second or the third jobs. Lecturers may [then] concentrate to make [these time-consuming] change because this is their duty. (Luc)

In general, shifting the culture of student assessment in Vietnam's higher education was seen as forming one part of an even bigger need to shift the culture of support for academic staff members by supporting more learner-centred approaches to teaching. This requires: increasing salaries; improving the staff-to-student ratio; providing improved teaching facilities; and enabling lecturers to participate more fully in professional development opportunities.

Implications

The findings reported above give rise to a number of implications. First, most participants regarded student assessment as an integral part of the teaching process and also an important driver of the quality of student learning. Their views mirrored insights reported by Marton et al. (1984) and by Biggs (1996), amongst others. Most of the participants also recognised the potential of formative assessment to motivate students to engage more deeply with their studies by using 'deeper' approaches to learning, as described by Marton et al. (1984), and many others over almost four decades. In most cases, the participants were genuinely interested in adopting approaches to learning that focused less on simply ranking student performance and more on encouraging students to become more self-directed with their learning. In this vein, Nguyen Thi Hong Tham (2013) and Ho Thi Nhat (2015) have also reported that lecturers in higher education institutions in Vietnam are open to explore alternatives to the present regime of reliance on summative examinations . To date, however, the commitment to achieve change has been an individual rather than a system-wide choice and responsibility. In a complex adaptive system, as described by Stacey (1995) and Fullan (2007), the commitment of individuals to change is not likely to be sufficient to achieve deep and meaningful system-wide change. There must also be a whole-of-system commitment to change, which means a change in the values and commitments of an entire community of practice.

Second, MOET has overall responsibility for curriculum matters in Vietnam. Leadership in any change process needs to be initiated, supported and reinforced by MOET if widespread cultural change is to occur. The Adaptive Implementers and Changing Pragmatists, whilst eager for change, were very much aware that system-wide change needed MOET to provide clear and consistent leadership and direction. This perspective resonated with Fullan's emphasis on the essential role of government in achieving whole-of-system educational change. He regarded government as "a major force for transformation" (Fullan, 2007, p. 236). If, however, MOET, together with university leaders, are not convinced of the wisdom of the better research-informed approaches to student assessment, then the likelihood of their widespread adoption in Vietnam's higher education system can only remain restricted. At present, the national student assessment regulations require higher

education institutions to ensure that each student's performance is graded on a 10-point scale in every unit of study delivered. This requirement reportedly forced the participants, even the Adaptive Implementers, to grade their students in a way that reflected a rank, or cohort-referenced, order of merit. The Adaptive Implementers found this requirement difficult to reconcile with their commitment to formative assessment and with a reliance on the professional judgement of lecturers in assessing student performance. For most other participants, the requirement also raised questions about the intent of the MOET's policy statement in 2007 concerning student assessment, because the regulations issued by the MOET were not supported by protocols for how the regulations might be implemented. Fullan (2007, p. 87) describes this kind of a situation as one in which there is an incomplete understanding of the deeper underlying reasons why significant educational change is needed in an organisation such as a university, arguing that when an organisation has a clear vision, underpinned by a clear set of values and a singular purpose, then that vision permeates the organization, providing the 'moral purpose' for enduring educational change.

Third, clearly the time is ripe for MOET to articulate a vision for the future of student assessment across Vietnam's higher education system. Ideally, this vision commits the system to more learner-centred approaches to student assessment, such as through the use of standards-based and formative assessment practices. Individual higher education institutions would then be obliged to produce coherent statements about the assessment procedures they endorse, together with clear guidance for the implementation of these procedures. Further, MOET would need to acknowledge the amount of time it takes to implement more effective student assessment procedures, and so teachers would need to be remunerated and reviewed, with annual performance review and development requirements instituted, accordingly. The challenge MOET faces is huge. Other national systems have taken decades of wrangling with the different dimensions of the same kind of challenge. Hopefully, effective change will not take as long to be achieved in Vietnam where the lessons of several decades can be assimilated without a trial-and-error form of learning.

A commitment to the professional development of academic staff members across the Vietnamese higher education system is also required for such an important evolution in teaching, learning and assessment practices. Most of the participants in the investigation reported that their experiences of professional development regarding the adoption of new approaches to student assessment had been inadequate, or, more widely, non-existent. In the case of the Changing Pragmatists, the absence of professional development was reported to have influenced their decision to remain locked into summative assessment practices, even though they were not comfortable with them. Professional development activities provided to date by MOET reportedly fell well short of the expressed needs of the participants concerning the need for information about new approaches to student assessment. In this regard, both Goldenberg and Gallimore (1991), and Mouza (2002), have reported on the limited utility of short training programs in providing ongoing support for long-term change processes. In the same vein, Kane and Khattri (1995) reported that educators cannot be expected to incorporate new formative assessment practices in their teaching without the support of lengthy and intensive professional development programs. It is essential, therefore, that teacher training universities in Vietnam should have their own well-planned and on-going systems for the professional development of lecturers and academic managers. Kane and Khattri (1995) suggested that such programs need to help lecturers to know how to design assessment tasks, how to design rubrics, how to set up student performance standards and how to provide constructive feedback to students.

Many Changing Pragmatists reported that they did not feel well supported by their education managers to vary their assessment practices. These participants did not sense opportunities for "learning in context", as described by Fullan et al. (2005, p. 58). Wenger (1998b) argued that academic settings are communities of practice in which negotiation, exchange and collaboration are essential for change to happen. In this regard, the Adaptive Implementers and Changing Pragmatists clearly pointed to the need for institutions to commit to providing opportunities for continuous on-the-job learning by creating and supporting communities of practice for benchmarking knowledge gains

and for sharing effective efficiencies in practice. This need is especially pressing. It reflects the basic socio-semiotic stances of Fullan (2007, p. 153) and of Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 98). The process of sharing information, insights and advice relevant to learners' existing learning issues could help lecturers negotiate the best ways to implement change in student assessment for effective practice.

A fourth implication of the findings from the present investigation points to the imperative of MOET needing to provide substantial investment in resources, facilities and incentives to create teaching environments conducive to effective learning and student assessment. The adverse impact of limited resources on the quality of teaching and learning in Vietnam has been widely recognised (see, for example, Hayden and Lam Quang Thiep, 2010; Nguyen Thi Hong Tham, 2013; Le Thi Kim Anh and Hayden, 2017). These circumstances were instrumental in persuading many of the Changing Pragmatists to not embark on changes in their student assessment practices. For many of these participants, large class sizes, limited resources and the need to devote spare time to earning income meant that it was easier to rely on examination-based summative assessments. The question of finding additional resources, and of providing resource-related incentives, is, however, challenging in the context of Vietnam, where budgets for universities are extremely limited, even though aspirations for global parity remain high and provide aspirational motivation for all academic staff members.

No less important is a fifth implication, that is, concerning accountability as the cornerstone in change management. There is a need for what Fullan (2010, p. 66) refers to as "intelligent accountability". Many Adaptive Implementers reported a significant gap in the level of trust amongst lecturers. While they worked very hard to change student assessment practices, others merely did whatever was the minimum required to fulfil their responsibilities. Clearly not all lecturers enjoy a work environment in which those who make more of an effort are neither acknowledged nor rewarded. At present, the accountability framework focuses simply upon the distribution of grades for a unit, regardless of how these grade distributions have been achieved. There is much to be done in terms of developing a targeted monitoring and evaluation capacity in the implementation of assessment and grading practices. Maughan, Teeman, and Wilson (2012) argued that careful monitoring informs decision making at all levels of a system, provides an analysis of ongoing needs, and builds trust as well as understanding within a community. Such a development is essential for higher education institutions in Vietnam.

The participants' comments reveal a general lack of communication among lecturers, and between lecturers and academic managers, about improving the quality of student assessment practices at the site institutions. The theory of complex adaptive systems (Stacey, 1995) points emphatically to the critical importance of communication in allowing differences and dialogues to act as drivers for change. Fullan (1999) further recommends treating resistance as an essential driver of change, arguing that dissimilar ideas and perspectives enable members to work together to address complex problems.

An appreciation among institutional and departmental leaders is needed, therefore, regarding the importance of creating institutional cultures where teaching staff members can interact, self-organise and develop new patterns of behavior to achieve better, more effective student learning outcomes. As Nguyen Phuong Mai, Terlouw, and Pilot (2005) observed, though, the cultural focus of social relations in Vietnam tends to be upon maintaining harmony and avoiding conflict, which runs counter to a culture of vigorous debate and healthy critique that results in new forms of social equilibrium. However, it is not necessarily so dire. A culture of leadership that is concerned more with evaluating different perspectives than with issuing orders based on traditional allegiances would make significant strides forward.

Belief and commitment are critically important to reform in the way student assessment, and in turn student learning, is conducted in the setting of teacher training universities in Vietnam. Fullan's (2007, p. 36) basic argument that beliefs and understanding are fundamental to lasting educational change is highly relevant to this context. The underlying principles of formative, standards-based assessment, and the assumptions about the nature of quality in a learner-centred learning environment that underpin these principles, are potentially confronting in the context of

higher education in Vietnam. The Defending Denialists were in many respects the defenders of the *status quo,* which is based on traditional values and beliefs. Attempts to change student assessment practices in teacher training universities will need to overcome a strong tendency for the system at large to see norm-referenced examinations as being the Confucian norm.

Conclusion

This investigation has pointed to the many challenges facing efforts to embed a 'learning culture', including the adoption of standards-based and formative approaches to student assessment in the higher education system in Vietnam. The Adaptive Implementers comprise a category of reformers within the system, but they are as yet a minority group. Their size and impact would increase if those classified as Changing Pragmatists could be provided with the encouragement, training and reward for joining them in reforming approaches to student assessment. The Defending Denialists represented the *status quo*, and may well be representative of most academic staff members in Vietnam. Achieving change amongst this group will require firm systemic leadership and policy guidance, increased opportunities for appropriate professional development, a monitoring and evaluation framework that accentuates the need for accountability and transparency, and whole-of-institution commitments to change, which higher education systems such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and others have managed through system-wide protocols and rewards for good teaching.

This investigation has reported findings consistent with those recently reported by Ho Thi Nhat (2015), who showed that changes occurring at a policy level in Vietnam are likely to be ineffective if not sustained by a supportive institutional environment for teaching and learning, a focus on training, and a high level of participation by faculties in the adoption of change. Adaptive change is complex but necessary, and the theory of complex adaptive systems suggests that the results of change are often unpredictable. However, without change in student assessment practices in higher education institutions in Vietnam, it seems unlikely that Vietnam will develop a 'learning culture' in these institutions, thereby missing the opportunity to achieve comparability with 'world-class' standards in teaching and learning.

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Appendix A

Interview Schedule

1. Please tell me how long have you been working in this institution and what role or responsibilities you have regarding teaching and assessment at this institution?
2. What units do you teach currently, and could you please tell me how you assess student learning in each of them?
   a. What do you want to assess and how do you do this?
   b. How do you grade a group of students?
   c. And how often and how do you provide feedback to your students?

   (And if the participant was an educational manager: What are the main forms of student assessment in your institution? And what forms of student assessment do you prefer as a manager? Why?)
3. What do you most value, as a lecturer, in student assessment?
   a. When implementing student assessment, what are your main assessment purposes?
   b. What is your understanding of the teacher's role in the assessment process?
   c. What important learning outcomes do you look for?

   (And if the participant was an educational manager: As an educational manager, what do you value, most in student assessment? What main outcomes do you expect from your institution's student assessment practices?)
4. In the literature on student assessment, there are many approaches to assessment described. How familiar are you with any of this literature or these models?
5. How are your student assessment practices different from what you did ten years ago?
   (And if the participant was educational manager: How much do you know about any Government regulations or national protocols for student assessment? And what are your views about them?)
6. If you were to try to improve your assessment tasks, what changes would you make, and why?
   (And if the participant was educational manager: To what extent do you encourage lecturers to implement these regulations?)
7. When you look around within your School, what student assessment practices do you see where you would like to see change? What concerns you most about student assessment in your School?

8. What practical difficulties do you face with when you implement student assessment? (And if the participant was educational manager: If an academic staff member does not fully comply with these approaches, explain why this might be.)
9. If you had three wishes for how student assessment practices in your School should change, what would they be? How much ability to affect changes like these in your School do you have? (And if the participant was educational manager: How much influence do you have over assessment and grading practices?)
10. And, if you had three wishes for how to change your own assessment practices, what would they be? How much authority do you have to make these changes yourself?
11. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about student assessment practices in your School?

High Impact Tourism Training (HITT) Programme in Nepal[1]

Jonathan Demenge[a]
Independent Development Consultant
Bibek Shrestha
Nepal Agribusiness Innovation Centre

Abstract: *The High Impact Tourism Training (HITT) was a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme implemented by the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV). It targeted informal workers from the tourism sector, notably women and youth, unskilled and semi-skilled workers in seven countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia: among them, Nepal. Through innovative solutions, the programme aimed to provide vocational training in tourism related activities to workers from the informal sector, women and youths - who usually had limited access to formal education - in order to increase their employability and income. After drawing the contours of the TVET sector and listing the main challenges to education in Nepal, the article shows how the HITT initiative chose to address them. Based on quantitative and qualitative evidence, we show that the strategy of intervention rests principally on two pillars: the introduction of active learning methods, and close collaboration with the private sector at every stage of the process, from the analysis of the sector and needs, to the design of the training, to the implementation. The article further dwells on the potentialities, limits and replicability of the HITT programme in Nepal.*

Keywords: *Technical Education and Vocational Training, Nepal, Tourism*

Introduction

When the small team at the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) started the High Impact Tourism Training (HITT) programme in Nepal, they were confronted with a major challenge: training a high number of beneficiaries from the informal sector into tourism related education with a very tight budget. Through its collaborative approach and the search for quality education and innovative solutions, the HITT programme managed to turn this initial challenge into an advantage. With limited time, human capital and budget, it set the blueprint for a vocational education scheme that combined relevance, quality content, sustainability and wide coverage. The key of success relied mainly on two elements. First of all, HITT introduced innovative teaching methods that contrasted drastically with traditional methods of education used in Nepal. Second, HITT relied on a close collaboration with the private sector from the analysis, to the design, to the development and implementation of training schemes. And companies bought in. The implementation of the scheme was never smooth, but the approach, which combined pragmatism, idealism and innovation worked beyond any expectations. Because it was tailored for companies and implemented by them, the scheme became actively supported and funded by the private sector.

This article sets the contours of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector in Nepal, the HITT approach and its implementation in Nepal. The authors are two ex-employees of SNV who both worked for the HITT programme in Nepal. This first-hand experience has provided us with a direct grasp on internal processes, privileged access to material and therefore unique insights on HITT.

[a] **Correspondence can be directed to: jon.demenge@gmail.com**

Context: The TVET Sector in Nepal

A former Shangri-La at the crossroad of the Indian sub-continent and China with a unique mix of cultures and landscapes spanning the whole range of ecosystems, Nepal continuously attracts travellers from all over the world. Because of Nepal's recent history made of civil war, political intrigues, unfinished constitution, shattered hopes and uneven development food insecurity, displaced populations, and natural disasters – including the terrible earthquakes of April and May 2015 that killed about 9,000 people, injured 22,000 others and destroyed around 300,000 houses – the country is also hub for development workers, volunteers, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), United Nations (UN) organisations and bilateral and multilateral donors.

With a population of more than 29.3 millions inhabitants and a poverty rate of 25.2% (at national poverty lines, 2010 figure, the latest available; World Bank 2018)), Nepal ranks 149 (out of 189) in terms of Human Development Index (UNDP 2018). Nepal's economy and population are highly dependent on agriculture, which accounts for more than a quarter of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and provides a livelihood for more than 70% of the population. Industrial activity is mostly limited to the processing of agricultural products. Nepal's labour force counts 16.8 millions people. With an estimated 3 millions Nepalese living and working abroad (mainly in South Asia, South East Asia and the Gulf Countries), the population depends heavily on remittances, which officially amount to as much as 30% of its GDP (CIA 2018), and possibly more. Remittances account for a large share of household's incomes, with increasingly positive impacts on health, education and possibly fertility rates (Glennie 2012).

In 2010 the number of new entrants on the job market was estimated at around 525,000, and increasing, for a workforce of roughly 12 millions (UNCTAD 2013, p. 182). Among them, 30,000 graduate from TVET annually (Lamichhane 2013, p.14). However, the basic education and TVET sectors are far from providing for the needs of these new entrants, and a large proportion of them enter the job market without any form of diploma. Youth unemployment rate is 8.8%, while a large proportion of youths is underemployed. The rates of unemployment among the educated youths is even higher, since "government literature reveal that employment of "skills training" graduates is between 30% and 50%" depending on sectors, and among 60% on average (Asian Development Bank 2014, p.12). In general, a large proportion of the new entrants is absorbed by the informal sector, which represents 69.7 per cent of workers outside agriculture (agriculture is almost entirely informal), or 86.4 percent of the working population if all sectors are included.

In terms of education, in 2006 16% of children had completed primary education, and only one child out of twenty passed the School Leaving Certificates (SLC), the examination at the end of 10th class (Vaux et al. 2006); in 2015 the figure was estimated to be between 10% and 15% in 2015 (Asian Development Bank 2015), although it varies a lot depending on caste, social status and gender (World Bank 2018). Although the mean year of schooling has increased from 3.2 years in 2014 to 4.9 years in 2018, it is still significantly lower than the world average of 8.4 years (UNDP 2018). Primary school dropout has shown a sharp decrease from 38.3% in 2014 to 26.5% in 2018. Adult literacy rate is 59.6% and 80.2/89.9% among youths female/male (aged 15-24) (Ibid.). Despite recent progress, low education and skill level of the workforce are often cited as one of the reasons for under and unemployment (Sharma 2013), if not for under-development at all:

> Along political uncertainty, its landlocked geographic location, power shortages, a poorly developed transportation infrastructure and susceptibility to natural disaster figure the lack of skilled labour as the main impediment to economic development (CIA, n.p.)

Low education and skill levels prevent access for a wide proportion of the population to further education and training. At the same time, education is increasingly demanded in order to fulfil the economy's need for qualified workforce, and the country's aspiration for social and economic development. This is also the case of the TVET sector.

As in 19th century Europe - where the spread of the vocational education system was linked to industrialisation – the extension of the TVET in Nepal is also driven by the need of a standardised and certified workforce. Previously, "education was always seen as the special privilege of few upper caste people of Nepal," while for the bulk of the population "people were meant to take their occupation as per their castes" (Bhandari 2013, p.32). Required skills were transferred from one generation to the other through an unorganized family-based apprenticeship training, which is seen as the oldest form of vocational training, and which still exists the country. Yet, if "vocational education, as a share of secondary education, has declined in almost every educational system in the world" (Benavot 1983, p.63), it is not the case in Nepal, where the expansion of the TVET sector is fuelled by several factors.

Historically, the introduction of a formalised TVET sector in Nepal can be dated back to the late 1930s/early 1940s, when the government established the Technical School and Cottage Industry Centre in Kathmandu and five years later schools in the fields of technical training (engineering), art, forestry and veterinary science. The opening of the country and the beginning of the "development era" at the end of the Rana period (1846-1951) increased the need for a technical workforce able to modernise the country and its economy. The Department of Cottage and Village Industries established a series of vocational training programmes which evolved into technical institutes. The Mechanical Training Centre opened in 1962, followed by the Butwal Technical Institute and the establishment of the multiple schools in the 1960s. Through the implementation of the National Education System Plan (NESP) in 1971, vocational and technical education was introduced in each secondary school, which had to provide instruction in at least one vocational subject.

Nearly two decades later, the system was sensibly modernised in an attempt to unify its structure and disaggregate it from the general education system. In 1989, the Council for the Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) was founded, under the Ministry of Education, with the objectives of developing national policies, coordinating the TVET sector, ensuring quality, and making technical and vocational education accessible to the poor. The CTEVT remains one of the most important institutions in the TVET sector in Nepal. The need of a skilled workforce to develop the country and reducing poverty became obvious to the government and development partners, who consequently gave a high priority and invested significantly in the vocational education sector in Nepal, leading to the creation of about 400 technical schools (Lamichhane, 2013). Yet, the present structure of the TVET remains rather disorganised, embodying the slightly haphazard development of the sector and at the same time exhibiting centralising and technocratic tendencies, while the TVET offer remains of variable, often low quality.

In terms of structure, the Ministry of Education is responsible for overall development of education in Nepal, including technical and vocational education. Within it, the Higher and Technical Education section is responsible for developing and implementing policy, rules and regulations. The CETVT**,** a national autonomous body mandated by the government is in charge of quality control, developing curricula and skill standards of various occupations and testing the skills of workers, among many other tasks. The National Skills Testing Board (NSTB) under the CTEVT is responsible for developing national occupational skill standards, conducting skills tests, and providing certification. The CTEVT also runs technical schools, colleges, institutes and training centres which provide various short and long term vocational training programmes in the fields of agriculture, engineering, health, tourism, management and computer science. The Training Institute for Technical Instruction (TITI), mandated by CTEVT and jointly governed by the ministries and the private sector, provides training to trainers, technical instructors and curriculum development specialists.

At the level of training delivery, the TVET sector in Nepal remains highly decentralised and heterogeneous, with public, private and non-for-profit organisations delivering technical and vocational training. TVET is provided through different governmental organisations under different ministries and their agencies such as the Vocational and Skills Development Training Centre (VSDTC), Cottage and Small Industry Development Board (CSIDB), and very importantly in our case the Nepal Academy for Tourism and Hotel Management (NATHM), which is responsible for hospitality, but also

trekking occupations. TVET programmes are also offered by private and public colleges with affiliation to Nepalese and international universities, especially in the case of Hotel and Tourism Management.

Private TVET providers - mostly concentrated in urban areas - also offer various short to medium term training. With private providers targeting most particularly youths aspiring to employment abroad, the training sector is in expansion. Yet, with the exception of private providers funded through donors' programmes, most of them are not financially viable. Private sector professional organisations such as the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI) also offer education and training through its trade schools. Graduates of vocational skills can have their qualifications and skills tested and recognised through the National Skills Testing Board. Finally, NGOs provide short-term education and training to the poorest and most vulnerable groups with the objective of improving people's livelihoods and well-being. These programmes are often not coordinated at national level.

Major international donors and international development agencies are also active in the TVET sector through various contributions. The Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), which has been active in the TVET sector since 1962, helped in establishing TITI and enhancing the capacity of the National Skills Testing Board (NSTB). SDC also assists the development of the TVET Fund and the reform of the CTEVT. The Employment Fund (EF) programme, also supported by SDC with co-funding from the Department of International Development (DfID) and the World Bank, is the largest TVET programme in Nepal and provides short-term market oriented skills training to youths in 54 districts. The Asian Development Bank (ADB), active in the sector since 1976 has focused its intervention, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and CTEVT, on improving the sector management and performance, enhancing quality and relevance of the training, developing curricula and trainers capacities, and helping deliver market oriented skill trainings through an increased involvement of the private sector in training delivery. Since 2011, the World Bank has been working on access to quality training with the MoE, CTEVT and the Ministry of Labour through the Enhanced Vocational Education and Training (EVENT) programme. The sector has also seen the involvement of international NGOs and development agencies such as Helvetas-Swiss Interco-operation, SNV, Plan Nepal, Action Aid, Practical Action as well as UN agencies such as the ILO and UNDP.

Most donors and agencies justify their investment in the TVET sector in social and economic terms. Bhandari writes that the TVET sector has the potential to "contribute to economic development" by providing "skilled human resources" and to "overcome social exclusion" (Bhandari 2013, p.30), and shows that social inclusion and equity are two essential objective pursued since the 1990s. Sharma also shows how different TVET programmes intend to contribute to poverty reduction. Beyond that, one cannot read off the association between unemployment and violent conflict. Although "there are no grounds empirically for the commonly made claims that there is a strong, automatic causal connection from unemployment, underemployment, or low productivity employment to violence and war" (Cramer 2010, p. 2) the association is often made in the literature and in development practice. Hughes for instance justifies the need for TVET in developing countries in general and in Nepal in particular by linking "the problem of the millions who do not attend school" or "attend poorly equipped schools with large classes and poorly trained teachers" to " civil wars, violence and disease" (Hughes 2005, p.260). "Building peace," he writes, "is greatly helped by a prosperous economy that depends in its turn on available workers with adaptable skills" (Hughes 2005, p.261). As the director of CTEVT Training Division puts it, besides fulfilling economic and individual aspirations "promoting technical education and vocational training would be one of the influential tools for reconciliation of the conflict victims that help generate income and employment" (Kafle 2012, p.110). The conflict-employment link is particularly present in two TVET programmes: ILO/FAO's Jobs for Peace Programme which aims to "contribute to national peace building and poverty reduction through employment and empowerment of youths" (ILO-FAO 2011, p.1), and GIZ's Support of Measures to Strengthen the Peace Process (STPP) which targets specifically Maoist ex-combatants.

Hence, as we can see, the TVET system in Nepal is rather fragmented and weakly coordinated. "TEVT programs and policies are effected as per the interest of donors" (Acharya 2011, p.43), and are not perceived as responding to local needs. Nationally, despite the plurality of offers and high competition between providers, the system is unsatisfactory from the point of view of quantity, access and quality. This is particularly the case for poor and disadvantaged groups as competition to entry is high and costs are prohibitive in relation to people's financial means, employment prospects and incomes. As Sharma notes, "the proportion of students enrolled in the vocational, "professional" and "technical" disciplines at the university remains extremely low, particularly from the poorer segments of the population" (Sharma 2012, p.4). Sinha also points to the huge disparities in access to TVET and technical professions regionally, caste wise and gender wise (Sinha, 2012). But one of the main issues is the quality of education. Most contents are out dated, and the quality of training does not meet the market needs and is often irrelevant to the sector, and young graduates lack training opportunities, career guidance and employment support. As a result, the TVET sector falls short of responding to the needs of the economy and to people's aspirations. Therefore, it also fails to improve people's well-being and act as a tool for social ascension and economic development.

The government of Nepal has tried to address these issues through several reforms and policies in order to increase training opportunities and produce a competitive workforce the country needed. It has attempted to expand technical and vocational education based secondary education, make skills testing and certification of skills available to the informal sector, build bridges between technical education and higher education and bring TVET institutions under its umbrella. Through the TVET policy initiated in 2007 an attempt was made to put inclusion and relevancy at the centre of the TVET system in order to make it more accessible, industry-oriented and bring it in line with contemporary international practices, notably (Sharma, 2013). The School Sector Reform Plan 2009-2015 also provided policy directions for vocational education such as introducing basic life skills and soft skills in the curricula, and improving secondary and higher secondary level examination and certification. Finally, the TVET policy -2012 prioritized questions of inclusion and access advocated for a substantial expansion of the sector. More recently, the Nepalese government came up with School Sector Development 2016-2023 to continue its efforts to ensure equitable access to quality education for all.

If such efforts to reform, organise, modernise and expand the sector by acting on the TVET offer are commendable, some of the main issues remain. A report published by ADB in 2002 sums up: "The national TEVT system is perceived to be irrelevant, ineffective, and inefficient with weak links to labour market demands" (Acharya 2011, p.39); quite paradoxically, that a "higher rate of unemployment among graduates of TEVT than among the uneducated" is observed illustrates this sad reality. Diagnoses and recommendations as to what priorities should be differ. Some critics point to the fact that Government's focus lies in expanding the TEVT programs rather than in ensuring quality. Responding to targets set in 10-year plans, Nepal has focused on numbers while neglecting quality, while the CTEVT has provided affiliations without considering the quality of training provided: "in order to improve the present situation CTEVT should focus its programs [on] quality control rather than on the expansion of TEVT programs" (Acharya 2011, p.45). But can we afford neglecting numbers in a country in which the training sector does not manage to respond to the needs of the economy and the population is ever expanding? Another criticism is that such reforms only address part the problem, which tend to be systemic. A first issue is under-allocation of funds, since the TVET sector barely receives 1% of all funds dedicated to education. A substantial expansion of the sector that would keep up with the annual increase of the working population would also require more government funding as well as other sources of financing: private sector for instance. Second, it is difficult to make the TVET sector suit the needs of the private sector unless the latter is more involved into the conception, curricula, content, practical training and certification of TVET courses. In other words, "interaction between CTEVT and the private sector needs to be strengthened to overcome the problem of skills mismatch and make TEVT more marketable" (Acharya 2011, p.36).

Third, the economic absorption of young trainees cannot happen unless the economic sectors and professions that are in demand are targeted by the TVET sector. In a nutshell, the TVET sector in Nepal fails to answer three basic issues: that of relevance of the training with regard to the demand, of quality of the training, as well as coverage (or quantity).

The HITT Programme

One may wonder what a new programme – with a limited budget – may add to a crowded sector such as the TVET, which has seen so many reforms and the involvement of many important donors. Obviously, a small player may not be able to influence any meaningful systemic reform of the sector; however, it may have the ability to innovate and show alternative ways. As we will see, the answer lies in its limited niche market approach, in its approach to the role of the private sector and in the introduction of innovative teaching and learning methods.

The HITT programme – High Impact Tourism Training for Jobs and Income – was a pilot project started in January 2011 simultaneously in 7 countries: Benin, Mali, Ghana, Mozambique, Vietnam, Cambodia and Nepal. The HITT programme was part of the *Investing in People* thematic programme funded by the European Commission during the period 2007-2013, aiming at helping EU partners' countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It was managed by the Netherland Development Organisation (SNV), an international development NGO founded in 1965 in the Netherlands. As it name points out, the programme focussed on training in tourism, a field in which SNV had a long experience and extensive network both county wide and worldwide, and which was identified as having a significant potential in terms of income generation and distribution.

The project was quite straightforward: identify occupations and training needs, develop training schemes and training material, train the trainers, deliver the training to end-beneficiaries and certify them, and finally evaluate the impacts of the programme. With a budget of EUR 2.5 million, the programme had to train 8000 people in three years, develop training material, and deliver institutionalised schemes that would empower the most vulnerable groups – mostly women and youths – and last beyond the duration of the intervention. In Nepal, 1000 people had to be trained, with a budget of EUR 300,000. In this section, we describe the process of training schemes development, before presenting the schemes and the results in more details.

Analysing and Developing Training Schemes with the Private Sector

During the inception phase, the context and tourism market in the country were analysed: size, structure and market growth potential, as well as identification of the key players. The initial study paid particular attention to potential value chains, bottlenecks and opportunities related to skills development, issues of access to training for the informal workforce, the employment situation in the tourism industry, potential salaries and wages and the status of labour unions. This confirmed the potential of tourism as one of the most promising sectors for development in Nepal, and a way to reach the poor, informal workers, and spread development to rural areas throughout the value chain. In a country with few economic resources but tremendous beauty like Nepal, it is a fact that tourism contributes a significant part to people's incomes. Nationally, tourism makes up 4 percent of total GDP and the share grows every year; tourism is also a major source of foreign currency. Tourism also has a high potential for job creation: in 2011 it was estimated that travel and tourism directly supported 412,500 jobs in Nepal (Sharma 2013, p.39).

Further meetings were held with tourism professionals – hotels, restaurants, trekking agencies as well as local authorities involved in tourism promotion - in order to map out the tourism sector, its main institutional and economic players. Meanwhile, the TVET sector was analysed: its actors and providers, their strengths and weaknesses, the way the sector is regulated, curricula developed, and certification done. The whole purpose of the exercise was to map the sector and identify training

needs and entry points for the programme, but also potential partners, within the public, private and development aid sector. It would also enable the HITT programme to develop long-term strategies for certification and sustainability of the scheme. As per the final report, "The main challenges that had to be addressed were the difficulty to fulfil the industry's needs and demands in terms of skilled employees, the limited efficiency of the training methods, the insufficient links between trainees and employment and the lack of mechanisms for self-monitoring and post-training performance tracking" (Eyraud and Annycke 2014, p.10).

The private sector also helped the team identify occupations that were highly demanded: assistant trekking guide, trekking cooks, lodge services, porters, housekeepers, hotel cooks, waiters, informations technology (IT) marketing staff, and rickshaw pullers. Among them, opportunities to reach informal workers, women and youths, were particularly considered, while two occupations were also discarded because of costs involved and barriers to entry (education) in the case of IT marketing staff, as well as technical reasons in the case of rickshaw pullers. In this latter case, training was deemed as not sufficient to have an impact on their employability and income. Another activity – focussing mainly on hygiene for the fast-food sector – was later added as suggested by the private sector, as corresponding to the needs of the moment: the Kathmandu authorities were cracking down on fast food restaurants and closing down many of them for health and hygiene reasons. Generally, all occupations were in high demand, due to the growing size and professionalization of the tourism sector, opening of new trekking routes, and request for safety and hygiene standards in the tourism and trekking sector in particular. We focus here on two of these occupations: trek leaders (or trekking guides), and hygiene training and service excellence for the fast-food sector.

The next step – still with the private sector – involved analysing further the profession, identifying existing training schemes and needs and getting key actors onboard. In most cases official training did exist. Trek leaders, for instance, had to follow a 4-week course with the Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management (NATHM), under the condition that they had acquired 2 years of experience, had a basic command of English and were recommended by an employer. Those interested in food and beverage services had to undertake a 6 months course. The entry requirement of "SLC pass", i.e. the examination sanctioning secondary education was a barrier to entry for the immense majority of youths. In Nepal, only 28 per cent of government school candidates pass their SLC exams (Bell 2015). Even for the brightest students who attend rural government schools where teachers are poorly qualified and mostly absent, and text books are maladapted and filled with mistakes, as we often encountered through our travels, passing the SLC exam is often no more than a distant dream.

One conclusion that came out of the initial research, was that most employers – especially in the trekking sector, but also in hospitality - did not really bother whether their employees had a certificate or not. As we often heard, "the quality of training is so poor that we have to train our employees ourselves". The information was also corroborated by the trainees themselves, who often complained that the content was irrelevant, the level low, students unmotivated, and that in the end they did not get much more than a paper certificate – that everyone got anyway. As a result, an informal system of training within companies had developed: trekking companies trained their best porters as assistant cooks, cooks, *serdars* (head porters and in charge of logistic), assistant guides, and finally guides. Similarly, budget hotels and restaurants trained young employees – often freshly arrived from rural areas of Nepal, with only limited education. These would stay for two or three years before joining higher end hotels once they had accumulated enough experience. And in both sectors, the immense majority of workers were informally employed.

Finally, the last step in the scoping study was to identify the learners' profile - gender, culture, numeracy and literacy – and their constraints (mostly seasonal or daily availability) in relation to the skills required for the occupation. Both occupations were largely male dominated. If those working in the trekking sector sometimes had good English skills, it was not the case in the food and hygiene sector. In generally, numeracy and literacy were quite low, as is often the case with workers from the

informal sector who tend to have limited formal education, mostly through government schools. This is one of the reasons why innovative teaching methods were required.

One of the strengths of the HITT programme was the introduction of an innovative learning approach which strongly contrasted from those usually used in the country. Education methods in Nepal tend to be extremely passive and not learner-centred. Someone with a long experience in training in Nepal and in Europe likened education in Nepal to "that in the UK under the 1944 Education Act." Techniques are mostly "talk and chalk". Students would learn through repetitions. As a trekking guide told us about his training: "We listened to academics giving lectures on flora and fauna but never went out to see what they looked like; we watched somebody climb but never experienced it" or "we quietly sat in a room next to people who could not read and write nor understand English, and half of the students were asleep". The certification was a kind of formality: "everybody had the certification, irrespectively of the achievements, as long as you had paid the fee".

By comparison, the "HITT learning approach" was founded on five core elements: andragogy, i.e. the process for adult learning; acknowledge prior learning and therefore use previous experience to support the pedagogy; active learning which involves the learner in the learning process (Prince, 2004); integrated learning which focus on real work in different contexts and settings, and privileges experience; and finally, creating motivation for learning. One of the central tools to orientate the approach was the Dale's *cone of learning* or *cone of experience*, which states that six weeks after a course, students remember only 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, but 70% of what they say and write and 90% of what they do (Dale, 1969). Hence, teaching had to be active, privileging the experience through all sort of games, role-plays, drama, exercises, videos, among others. For each occupation, teaching material was developed so as to incorporate this approach and to fit the profile of trainers and trainees: trainers' manuals, flip charts and posters, training kits. The material for homestay operators or cooks, for instance, was largely visual and made for trainees who were sometimes illiterate. By doing so, the programme also ensured that there was no crowding out of illiterate yet competent workers. The material was also portable and used local resources, so that it could be implemented in remote areas, sometimes one or two day walk away.

Although not revolutionary, by existing standards this way of teaching was a novelty in Nepal and was extremely effective. Also, for many trainers and trainees, it was a complete revelation: "We discovered that we can learn while having fun", as one mountain leader mentioned at the end of a training. And as a the manager of one of our partners who had successfully implemented a 4 day-training in his company mentioned: "although my trainers are exhausted, they managed to keep my 25 staff involved and alert for the whole duration of the training: this is a performance, which happened thanks to the active learning methods. This was by far the best training I have every witnessed."

Another central element was that the curricula, training content, format and material were developed jointly with the private sector, and validated by the private sector – not trainers or "technicians" but real professionals. The HITT approach consisted in asking the private sector with humility: "tell us what you need, and we will develop a scheme that will truly fits your needs." Hence directors and staff of trekking companies, hotels and restaurants identified the content of each training: what was required, what was relevant for their field, and how it should be taught. If professional standards based on best practices were incorporated and developed with professionals – including guides and trainers from the Union of International Mountain Leader Associations (UIMLA) and of the International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA), as well as the Petzl Foundation – these standards were always assessed and validated by the private sector, based on what is relevant in the case of Nepal. Later, private companies developed and tested the training methods and material together with the HITT team. They also identified the certification standards. In short, the private sector was at the heart of everything; the end-result was a training scheme that suited their needs, that they owned, and that would produce the workforce that they required. This would have a deep positive impact on the implementation and on the financing of the trainings.

Implementing the Training Schemes

The implementation of each training scheme differs and answered the specificities of each occupation. However, the approach privileged one basic principle: the maximum involvement of the private sector, as each training would be implemented within companies, by employees of the companies themselves, sometimes under the supervision and coaching of a HITT trainer. The principle was that of a cascading system: HITT master trainers would train employees to become trainers within their company; these would train the company's employees and end-beneficiaries. In a way, the HITT programme built on the existing practise of in-company training, but it standardised it and professionalised it, equipping in-company trainers with training skills and materials.

For Service Excellence and Hygiene, the master trainers trained two staffs from each fast-food restaurant - generally the owner or manager and head cook - as in-house-trainers. These would later train up to eight other employees or would be employees in their restaurants. Similarly for trek leaders, master trainers would train in-company trainers selected by their company based on their experience and aptitudes to train. Those then delivered the training to their companies. Initially, master trainers would coach, supervise and monitoring the training and monitored the training to ensure quality, before phasing out once quality had been reached.

For trek leaders, each company applying for the HITT training scheme would pass an agreement that would be formalised in a contract with SNV. SNV would train some of their employees as trainers; for each employee trained as a trainer, the company would train between 8 to10 guides, 70% of which would be informal workers. While the costs of training of trainers were supported by HITT, the costs of the training of beneficiaries was entirely born by the company. In total, at the end of the programme, 67 trainers and 394 guides had been trained through the scheme. A total of 23 companies as well as the Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal (TAAN) and the Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA) implemented the scheme. As far as service excellence and hygiene is concerned, more than 200 trainers were trained, and 94 training of beneficiaries (ToB) were implemented for a total of 790 beneficiaries. Hence, between the different occupations, 13 master trainers trained in the HITT approach trained 315 trainers, who delivered on the job training to employees and further beneficiaries. And since training capacities were created within companies, it is believed that more beneficiaries were trained after the end of the programme.

The main advantage was that those who trained others already knew the job, and now also knew how to pass on their knowledge. Moreover, each company would be able to tweak the training programme according to their own needs: once minimum standards were reached (mainly defined along quality and safety standards), each company was free to implement the programme they desired. Moreover, trainers trained into the HITT approach would contribute to the long-term training capacity of the company, while trained beneficiaries would be directly employable by the company without further training.

Results, Lessons Learnt and Replicability

In many ways, the results went far beyond expectations and targets. By the end of the programme, 1842 beneficiaries had been trained in five different occupations, out of a target of 1000, as measured by the monitoring system put in place. And it is likely that that more beneficiaries were trained after the end of the programme, since training capacities now existed within companies. This was also confirmed by the final report which concludes that "the capacities of the local training institutions will probably have a long term impact" (Eyraud and Annycke 2014, p. 81): "training partners confirmed that the methods they have learned have changed their approach to training in general. They all expressed their readiness to continue to use them" (Ibid.). The HITT programme showed that by putting the private sector at the centre, one could implement a training system that would ensure relevance, quality and quantity.

The level of satisfaction was quite high, among the beneficiaries as well as among company owners. TAAN's general secretary recognised after the completion of the first ToB that it was the best training that existed in Nepal. Another encouraging sign was that when the second ToB was organised, the team did not have to encourage trekking companies to get on board: it was trekking companies that called to join the scheme, sometimes pushed by their partners in Europe. TUI, the largest tour operator in the world even contributed to the programme with a donation of EUR 10,000, which paid the second ToB and the coaching of in-company training by the HITT trainers. And as the Managing Director of Mountain Monarch mentioned during the closing ceremony: "I give a great importance to the training of my guides and I make sure that every year they get the opportunity to upgrade their skills. The HITT training is by far the best quality training they have received."

A focus on targets could well have led to prioritising numbers and employability of candidates (such as experienced workers), instead of targeting the most vulnerable and poorest of the poor. It is a risk, notably in the international tourism sector, where standards and skills requirements can be quite high in comparison with the existing offer. The programme managed to target people with low level of education, as 88% had less than 12 years of schooling, and unemployed (27%), self-employed (6%), students (1%) and informal workers (60%) represented 95% of the beneficiaries. Also, a sizeable proportion consisted of women (22%) and youths (67%); the extremely poor (less than US Dollars 1.25 a day) made 39% of the total. The project also tried to collect information on incomes, but the data was unreliable due to the irregularity in revenues of beneficiaries and inability to estimate individual benefits. Yet, 91% of beneficiaries mentioned that they had observed an improvement in their income three to six months after the training. In the Service Excellence and Hygiene occupation, some restaurants that had been closed down by the authorities reopened after following the HITT training. The programme also received official recognition and media attention.

To some extent, the HITT programme was supported by external events and by the expansion of the sector: the opening of new routes, trekkers and trekking companies asking for increased security due to a series of unfortunate events, or the national authority cracking down on unhygienic practices in restaurants. The programme was carried by companies need for professionalization of training. And the low budget forced the HITT programme to find innovative solutions – like a high reliance on the private sector – which played in the advantage of the programme and made it demand driven. At the same time, the low budget also sometimes prevented the programme to recruit experienced but expensive consultants. The HITT team often had to engage with curriculum and material development, leading to over-charging the capacities of the team. On the upside, this situation led to the involvement of consultants who were deeply passionate and morally connected to the cause, to mountaineering and to Nepal.

In spite of these achievements, one may wonder what remains from the programme, what it was able to achieve on a larger scale, and how sustainable the scheme was. The answer depends on occupations. Overall, the programme has managed to train trainers that are embedded within companies and can deliver the training on a per need basis. Also, HITT developed an approach and numerous tools and material for the TVET sector, making it operational and reproducible. The programme has produced methodological manuals on the general approach (SNV, 2014a), the preparation of the activities (SNV, 2014b) and the learning process (SNV, 2014c) as well as numerous manuals which that are valuable resources for further TVET development projects, not only in the tourism sector. The HITT programme was a laboratory for the initial approach, and the whole duration of the programme has enabled its fine-tuning, and the results show that the approach was highly successful… although sometimes on a limited scale.

If the adoption of hygiene standards by a national authority (DFTQC) ensured the spread and generalisation of the HITT training scheme, the results regarding trek leaders should be put into perspective. It was believed that the NMA would endorse the scheme and make it the official trek leaders training scheme in Nepal; that the NMA would go on certifying trainers and trekking guided that would be trained by private companies; that it would go on managing the logbooks; and that this system would enable training enough trek leaders to satisfy the demand, and hence would created

a critical mass of trek leaders trained through the HITT approach. This failed for three main reasons. First, the NMA never really took their assessment role seriously and never adopted the decentralised system of training that was offered to them. Instead, the NMA kept on training a handful of trek leaders a year (20 to 25, when the needs are in the range of 1,500 a year to keep up with the growth of the sector and the needs for qualified guides. It also seems that the NMA tends to consider the trekking sector as a 'poor parent' in comparison to more respectable professions such as mountain guides. Third, and this is the main reason, NATHM still has a monopoly in terms of licensing trek leaders. Although providing inefficient substandard trainings and qualifications that are unsuited to the needs of the profession and of the sector, NATHM is the only organisation accredited by the government to give trek leaders licenses. As a consequence, NATHM, an organisation dealing with "tourism and hospitality management" still trains trek leaders for Nepal, at the rate of 800 per batch.

Why was NATHM, such a crucial player, not included into the list of partners of the HITT programme? With HITT's focus on quality training and on the private sector, NATHM was discarded at an early stage due its poor performance and irrelevance from the point of view of training companies. Working with NATHM, which is more competent in terms of hospitality than trekking, was also perceived as a potential threat to the credibility of the programme, HITT's key partners were not keen on working with NATHM either. Hence the decision was made to override NATHM and to offer a better alternative, get international certification through the UIAA and the UIMLA, and get the private sector, TAAN, as well as the NMA onboard. After all, the NMA had a better reputation in terms of training with its internationally certified mountain guides. This was probably a strategic mistake, and the HITT team should have known that one could not develop a sustainable mountain leaders training scheme in Nepal without first getting NATHM onboard. And in fact, the UIAA, TAAN and the NMA who are still working on the development of an internationally recognised certification for Nepalese trek leaders have since decided to include NATHM trek leader training as the entry point for trekking and mountaineering careers.

Was taking NATHM onboard an option? Perhaps, but the fact is that working with institutional partners and obtaining systemic changes takes time; and an NGO and a three-year programme are poorly equipped for this task. HITT did experience it in the beginning, when it attempted to reform the way CTEVT designed curricula by putting the private sector at the centre. Designing curricula was perceived as the prerogative of technicians, of the government, and not of the private sector; and this was not going to change. Organisations that benefit from the unconditional support of the government and of a monopoly over the certification of a profession or designing curricula have very little incentive to change the way they are working, especially if it means losing some of their key prerogatives (and the income that comes with it). Working with institutional partners takes time and necessitates making compromises. This is probably the reason why the idea of having a steering committee for HITT Nepal was abandoned from the very beginning. As the final evaluation puts it "the timeframe of the project was too tight for such complex and numerous activities and objectives" (Eyraud and Annycke 2014, p.9). By opposition, HITT was pragmatic and reactive, it would make alliances, and it would inform institutional partners rather than work with them. HITT's best bet was to show how well things could work and this is what it did; but that did not always lead to the idea being institutionalised or up scaled. In some cases, as in the hygiene and service excellence scheme it did; in other cases such as trek leaders, the scheme is there ready to be taken to the next level.

Conclusions

The HITT programme did show some results, and its most important contribution is to show that the system based on the involvement of the private sector does work. Hence, it offers solutions to some of the crucial issues encountered by the TVET sector, as identified in the first part of this article. First, it ensures relevance of the training, since professions and training content are identified by the private sector, and companies only train professions and skills that are in need. Second, the system also ensures training quality, since the content is developed by or with the private sector. Third,

the system enables training on a large scale, since companies and their trainers act as multipliers, training far more people than could a training institute. The system also has multiple benefits for private companies, since it enables them to adapt training schemes to their needs, to produce readily employable staff, and to have training competencies within the company, that can be mobilised whenever required. Because of these advantages, companies are ready to support the system and finance it, as companies did pay to train HITT's end beneficiaries. Hence, the private sector is also a potential source of financing for the TVET, as long as it suits its needs.

The system also managed to increases the employability of trainees, and therefore their income and perspectives for personal and professional development. To some extent it did reach the poor, vulnerable individuals, weakly educated and youths. Beyond the introduction of new training techniques, HITT carried one single message: the private sector must be put at the centre of the TVET sector. This is a formula that has been successful elsewhere, but lacks in nearly every country in South Asia (Asian Development Bank, 2014).

However, the case of the HITT programme in Nepal also showed that an NGO with a small programme is also poorly suited to dialogue with and influence state institutions. Similarly to a small ship manoeuvring through a difficult channel made of high sands, see walls and strong currents, it can skilfully manoeuvre within the institutional framework, using winds and currents, or temporarily rowing harder to adjust its trajectory; but it cannot move barriers and reform the political economy of TVET in Nepal.

On the other hand, along with its partners, the HITT programme has contributed to show what is possible. A navigation map has been drawn, several captains and helmsmen have been trained, and lighthouses have been built. All is in place to bring the admiral ship (the TVET sector) – and its fleet (the private sector) – at sea, help deliver efficient training schemes that lead to quality and coverage, and cruise through the needs of Nepal's economy.

Notes

[1] This article is an updated and edited work from *Education and NGOs (2015), London: Bloomsbury Academic.*

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Selective Secondary School Education In Barbados: The Need For Change

Marcia Pilgrim
Providence Secondary School
Garry Hornby [a]
University of Plymouth
Tara Inniss
University of the West Indies

Abstract: *This article examines the implications of selective secondary school education in Barbados for the provision of an inclusive and equitable education system and highlights its impact on educational outcomes. The concepts of inclusion and equity in education are discussed and their importance in achieving the education goals of nations within the English-speaking Caribbean are highlighted. The historical development of the selective secondary school system in Barbados is outlined and the inequity perpetuated by high stakes selection examinations are examined. The ongoing effects of the ability grouping that result from this process are discussed. The need for a move away from a selective secondary education system is proposed and a possible means for bringing about this change in Barbados is explored. This has important implications for countries in the Caribbean and in other parts of the world that have selective secondary school education systems.*

Keywords: *equity, inclusion, selective education, ability grouping, education systems*

Introduction

Selective secondary schooling in Barbados has implications for educational outcomes, the social inclusion of all children, and the provision of an equitable education system. The concept of social inclusion is used as a lens through which to view practices aimed at including individuals and groups living at the margins of society as a result of poverty or other forms of disadvantage. As such it is embedded in the values of an equitable and just society (Terzi, 2014). Inclusive education is regarded as an important vehicle through which a socially inclusive society might be achieved (UNESCO, 2000) and, it is argued, "…places the well-being and agency of all children, and children with disabilities and difficulties in particular, at the centre of the educational process" (Terzi 2014, p. 480).

Inclusion and Equity

The inclusive agenda in education recognizes the rights of all students to a quality education, so is by its very nature an equity agenda. It is promoted through education systems that support all students in reaching their full potential, "…without either formally or informally erecting barriers or lowering expectations" (Schleicher 2014, p. 19). Internationally, inclusion and equity are regarded as essential to the creation of the highly skilled work forces needed to drive the economic growth of nations and promote their social cohesion (Schleicher, 2014, 2018). These concepts underpin the Barbados Human Resource Development Strategy 2011-2016, with its mission statement, "To

[a] **Correspondence can be directed to:** garry.hornby@plymouth.ac.uk

develop national, institutional, and human capacity so that the potential of all Barbadians is fully realized" (Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development 2010, p.1).

The concepts of inclusion and equity are also echoed in national policy documents across the English-speaking Caribbean. For example, the *National Strategic Plan* of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, *Vision 2020,* aims to ensure that diversity is valued, citizens benefit from a relevant education system, and that every citizen has an equal opportunity to achieve his or her full potential. In addition, the promotion of inclusive education is identified as an important component in achieving quality education outcomes (Ministry of Planning and Development, nd). Similarly, in the document, *The Development of Education,* the Ministry of Education in Jamaica outlines its commitment to promoting inclusive education, and emphasis is placed on the need to ensure equal opportunities for all students irrespective of their cultural, economic and social status or their perceived abilities or disabilities (Ministry of Education, Jamaica, 2008).

As is the case with other Caribbean nations, Barbados has embraced a range of international agreements as part of its aim to promote equitable and inclusive education and to improve educational outcomes for students. These include a commitment to *Education for All* goals (UNESCO, 1990) that were adopted by the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. Against an international backdrop of great inequity in which over 100 million children, including at least 60 million girls, were without access to primary education, one of the stated purposes of the *Education for All* goals was to promote equity and reduce disparities in education. Within its broad vision of including all marginalized groups, it was recognised that, "the needs of the disabled demand special attention" (UNESCO 2000, p.75).

Based on an evaluation of progress towards the 1990 goals, Barbados was one of the nations that recommitted itself to the vision of *Education for All* by adopting the *Dakar Framework for Action* (UNESCO, 2000). A major focus for many large states remained universal access to basic education and the increase of educational opportunities for girls (Crossley, Bray and Packer, 2011). However, like many small island states able to take advantage of their small scale, educational priorities in Barbados have moved beyond these parameters and lay instead in focusing on improving the quality of education (Crossley and Sprague, 2012; Rudder, 2014). To this end, improving educational opportunities in ways that are equitable and inclusive and do not discriminate or exclude vulnerable groups, for example, the poor and those with special educational needs and disabilities, remains an important imperative (UNESCO, 2000).

Central to the concept of equity in education is the understanding that all learners are of equal importance (De Lisle, 2012; Shaeffer, 2013; UNESCO, 2017). For equity to be achieved the personal circumstances of young people, for example, socio-economic status, gender and ethnicity, must not be obstacles to their educational success. The equity agenda is regarded not only as a social justice imperative but also as a way of ensuring that resources are used effectively in the pursuit of national prosperity (OECD, 2016). Schleicher (2014) emphasises that where optimum opportunities are available for all members of a society to develop skills and achieve success in the educational process, they are likely to participate more fully in economic, social, civic and political processes. They are also less likely to be a burden to society in terms of health costs and involvement in crime. It is critical therefore that all nations, including small island developing states, such as those in the Caribbean, reflect on the capacity of their educational systems to promote equity.

The education of its people has been a national priority for successive governments of Barbados. Consequently, Barbadians have enjoyed the benefits of universal access to primary and secondary education for many years through an extensive network of schools (Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, 2000). The high priority given to education is demonstrated by the large financial commitment to the sector. On average 16% of government spending in Barbados and 6% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been allocated to education over the past thirty years (Rudder, 2014). Of the three independent Caribbean Community countries considered to be the most developed, including Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados has invested the most heavily in education (Jennings, 2017).

Indeed, several initiatives aimed at improving the quality of education, and thereby outcomes for students, have been undertaken in recent years as a result of this significant investment and a range of achievements have been reported (Rudder, 2014). For example, high literacy rates being maintained and renewed emphasis placed on teacher training. Emphasis has also been placed on professional development, for example, through the implementation of a positive behaviour management programme that has seen training in all nursery, primary and secondary schools. In addition, early childhood education provision has been expanded, information technology has been better integrated into the school system and continued opportunities for young people to pursue technical and vocational training and to acquire work related skills have been provided (Rudder, 2014). Barbados has also pursued initiatives aimed specifically at advancing its special and inclusive education agenda and seeks to provide a continuum of options for students with special educational needs, from full-time placements in special schools, through to pull-out support in resources centres, as well as access to full inclusion models where students remain in the regular classroom for all of their time at school (Blackman, Conrad and Brown, 2012).

Despite progress made towards *Education For All* goals, ensuring the quality of the education system and improving educational outcomes for young people remains a concern in Barbados (Rudder, 2014). In order to gain a better understanding of how the education system might be improved so that student outcomes are optimized, it is important to address issues that may give rise to hidden but systemic inequity and therefore have an impact on the realization of optimum student outcomes nationally. In seeking to understand these issues, the historical context and legacy of the education system in Barbados, and in other counties of the English-speaking Caribbean, must be considered.

Historical Context

The education system in Barbados has its roots in the plantation slave-based society that characterized most of the colonial period. During this period, wealthy planters who were resident on the island sent their children, mostly sons, to be educated in Britain, while daughters had a limited education, sometimes acquired through small local private schools, which focused on their roles as wives and mothers to the elite planter class (Mayers, 1995). Education of the enslaved population was not encouraged and there were limited opportunities for poor whites. However, as early as 1682, wealthy planters identified the need to provide some level of education, especially for poor white boys, and a number of legacies were entrusted to establish schools, such as The Lodge School, Harrison College, Combermere and Queen's College, which still exist today (Bacchus, 2006). Eventually these schools developed enviable academic reputations, becoming the preferred institutions on the island to send promising children of both elite and non-elite backgrounds.

However, educational opportunities for the enslaved population throughout this period were minimal and, with some exceptions, there was an active attempt by the wealthy elite to limit their education. For example, from the 1660s, the Quakers promoted Christian education of their enslaved workers but were persecuted to the point of exile for such anti-slavery sentiments. Only at the Codrington Estates did enslaved workers and their children receive rudimentary Christian instruction (Bennett, 1958). Following the incursion of Christian missionaries such as the Moravians and Methodists, Christian education spread to a number of other estates. However, it was not until 1818 that the first school for enslaved and free coloured children was established in Bridgetown (Blouet, 1991). As slave emancipation became imminent in the early nineteenth century, the Anglican Church took an increasing interest in providing education as a means of instructing a newly emancipated population in the responsibilities of freedom and Christian morality, in order to maintain economic, political and social order in the society. Many of the primary and secondary schools that evolved have now been incorporated into the public education system. It is clear, therefore, that the Barbadian education system is rooted in inherited inequalities that have subsequently proven challenging to shed.

Prior to independence, colonial educational systems in the English-speaking Caribbean continued to be elitist and to serve the purpose of reinforcing economic and social hierarchies in Caribbean societies, which kept the working classes on the bottom while only allowing for the selected elevation of a small number of high-achieving students to elite gender-segregated secondary schools (Best, 2008). It was thought that this elite group, mostly boys, would benefit from the academic secondary education provided and would fill posts in the civil service, with some going further to gain university entrance and form the intellectual and professional elite of the colonies. Girls' education was often limited to gendered stereotypes of women's domestic roles as wives and mothers, with promising female students only being encouraged to enter the nursing and teaching professions (Downes, 2003). In a context in which there were very few secondary school places available, those students seeking admission underwent a competitive selection process by way of various secondary school entrance examinations. It is on this legacy of selection of the few that the post-colonial education system in the English-speaking Caribbean was built. It is a legacy that has endured, despite the expansion of secondary school systems across the Caribbean to achieve the realization of universal secondary education (De Lisle, 2012; De Lisle, Seecharan and Ayodike, 2010).

In Barbados, each secondary school had its own entrance examination. But in 1959, there was the introduction of what is today known as the Barbados Secondary Schools Entrance Examination (BSSEE), or the Common Entrance Examination (CEE), which was a standard test for students between the ages of 10 and 12 to be allocated a place in a secondary school. This was considered to be needed since, during the post-independence era, from the late 1960s, secondary education continued to be highly valued by the general population at a time when there were not enough places to meet the growing demand. Therefore, secondary school entrance examinations were widely viewed as a fair way to select those students considered most deserving of the limited places. The stakes in these examinations were high, as future life chances and opportunities for social mobility and economic success were closely linked to success or failure on the examination (De Lisle, 2012; De Lisle et al., 2012).

By the start of the 21st Century, universal access to secondary education had been put in place in many Caribbean countries. However, high stakes examinations at the transition between primary and secondary school remained a prominent feature of the educational landscape, even though many territories had by that time committed enough secondary school places for every student in the compulsory education system, and mostly within close proximity to students' homes (DeLisle, 2012). Although test names and content have undergone some changes, their role simply changed from being a mechanism for awarding the few coveted places to the most deserving, to one of channeling the best students into the most prestigious and highly sought-after schools. Therefore, a key legacy of the colonial era, that has remained in place across the Caribbean, is a selective system that is stratified, segregated, elitist and exclusionary (De Lisle, 2012). In Barbados this system has been successful in producing a small number of highly educated young people at the expense of providing a less than exemplary education for the majority of secondary school students. This is illustrated by results of the annual award of prestigious scholarships for university study to a few dozen students when they complete secondary education. The winners of these scholarships come almost exclusively from the two highest ranked of the 24 government secondary schools, Harrison College and Queens College (Downes, 2018), whereas the majority of prison inmates come from the eight lowest ranked secondary schools (CJRPU, 2017).

In order to explain the impact of this historical legacy the following section will discuss the use of high stakes education placement tests in the English-speaking Caribbean. The intentions as well as the consequences of such tests will be considered. Issues relevant to segregation within the secondary school system will be discussed and consideration given as to whether such a system serves to perpetuate inequity and further disadvantage vulnerable groups in society, including students with special educational needs and disabilities.

High Stakes Placement Tests in the Caribbean

High stakes tests are considered to be, "…any tests the results of which are used to make important decisions about students, educators, schools, or districts" (Glossary of Education Reform, 2014). After independence, tests at the end of primary education for the purpose of placing students into different secondary schools continued to be administered in English-speaking Caribbean countries, with high stakes for students and their families. Countries in which such tests are a central feature of the education system include St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, Jamaica, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago. Tests vary in name and content between countries but typically cover similar curriculum areas such as Language, Creative Writing and Mathematics (De Lisle, Smith, Keller and Jules, 2012). For example, in Trinidad and Tobago the national selection examination is the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA), while in Barbados the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) is administered, and in Jamaica the results of the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) are used for placing students in secondary schools (De Lisle et al 2012; Jennings, 2017; Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs & Culture, 2000; Jamaica Task Force on Educational Reform, 2004).

When considering the use of these tests, it is important to understand their educational intentions as well as their consequences for young people and the societies that they serve. High stakes tests are intended to serve important policy goals, for example, to raise student achievement levels and ensure equal opportunity. The rationale for their use is that allocating students to supposedly homogeneous groups allows teachers to focus teaching of the curriculum more carefully on the needs and aptitudes of students and to teach at a pace that will enable all students to maximize their learning (De Lisle et al 2012; Jennings, 2017). Advocates of this type of grouping consider, for example, that in homogeneous groups more able students are less likely to become disengaged because of a slow pace of learning while less able students will benefit from a pace of learning better suited to their needs (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2005).

However well intentioned high stakes placement tests are, it must be recognized that the use of such tests to separate students into schools or classes of different ability levels is not supported by research evidence of improved education outcomes (Slavin, 1990, 1993). Instead, research suggests that where students are allocated places in schools based on ability or attainment, school systems become segregated by social-economic status and educational outcomes are inequitable (Gorard and Huat See, 2013). Decisions to implement high stakes placement tests can, therefore, have far reaching negative consequences for young people and societies, as well as running counter to the values of inclusive education, which seeks to welcome and embrace diversity in all schools.

Gorard and Huat See (2013) refer to segregation in the school system as the clustering of students with certain characteristics into schools with others like themselves. In implementing a testing regime to feed such a system it is critical to carefully weigh its potential benefits against its probable negative consequences in order to determine whether the testing regime achieves better overall educational outcomes for students and also to evaluate its impact on equity within the education system.

Inequity and Common Entrance Examinations in the English-Speaking Caribbean

One of the stated intentions of high stakes examinations in the English-speaking Caribbean is to, "allocate places in the secondary school fairly" (De Lisle et al. 2012, p.59). In its White Paper on Education Reform in Barbados, the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture (1995) concludes that the CEE should be retained in Barbados at the transition between primary and secondary school because it is perceived as the fairest means of assessing students. However, research (De Lisle et al., 2012) suggests that the extent to which the goal of fairness is achieved is questionable and therefore the decision to continue to use this test based on a perception of fairness must be carefully scrutinized. In evaluating evidence from Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) data in Trinidad and Tobago between 1995 and 2005, De Lisle et al. (2012) noted that results suggested complex patterns of gender disadvantage as well as disadvantages related to socio-economic status and ethnicity.

In Trinidad and Tobago, as in other Caribbean countries including Barbados, an element of parental choice forms part of secondary school placement. Parents indicate which schools they would like their children to attend. If, however, their children do not achieve the marks on the SEA or CEE required for eligibility to the schools chosen by parents, they will not be admitted to those schools and will instead be assigned to other schools. The De Lisle et al. (2012) study found that students living in high-income areas were far more likely to gain entry into schools of their choice, whereas students from low-income areas were not. In addition to these concerns that children from poorer backgrounds were being disadvantaged, the authors also point to other issues relevant to achieving fairness in high stakes testing. Attention is drawn to how actual test design has the potential to disadvantage some groups of learners more than others. For example, following a 2005 redesign of the SEA in Trinidad and Tobago, results indicated that a greater proportion of boys were falling below the 30% cut off score and therefore increasing numbers of boys were being identified as having special educational needs and being allocated to remedial placements. Findings such as these highlight concerns that tests such as the SEA or CEE are not the neutral tools for allocating places fairly that they are perceived to be by the public in Caribbean countries.

Although there are only a small number of studies related to placement tests in the Caribbean, from the 1960s onwards researchers such as Cross and Schwartzbaum (1969), in their analysis of the impact of SEA data, pointed to its segregating effect in Trinidad and Tobago. Students were found to be entering secondary schools divided along lines that reflected their socio-economic status and ethnicity. Jules (1994) in his study of data collected between 1986 and 1993 also found that groups of students experienced disadvantage due to factors such as socio-economic status, ethnicity and gender. Additionally, in Barbados, a report on the transfer of students from primary to secondary schools found that students were advantaged or disadvantaged depending on the quality of the primary school they attended (Barbados Ministry of Education, 1974). It was also found that children who were economically advantaged and attended private primary schools were far more likely to gain entry into elite secondary schools. For example, Jennings (2017) reports on statistics that indicate that 64% of children who attended a private primary school in Barbados were likely to perform above the national average in the English component of the CEE, compared with only 11% of those who attended government primary schools.

To summarize, the perceptions of Caribbean communities that by using tests such as the SEA or CEE fairness is achieved is not borne out by the evidence to date. On the contrary, evidence suggests that attempts at academic segregation at the transition to secondary schools in the Caribbean result in inequity characterized by the clustering of socio-economically advantaged students into the most prestigious schools. Such an effect is incompatible with the aims of inclusive education as a vehicle for equity and social justice and with the current vision of an inclusive education system, as outlined in government policy documents (Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, and Ministry of Labour, 2010; Ministry of Planning and Development, nd).

Other Unintended Consequences Associated with High Stakes Examination

Apart from the negative effects discussed above, a range of other unintended consequences of high stakes tests have been identified in the literature. These relate to the overwhelming pressure of these tests on teachers, schools and parents, in addition to their impact on students socially and academically (Galloway and Upton, 1990; Walker and Musti-Rao, 2016).

A key issue is the narrowing of the curriculum, and the use of teacher-centred rather that student-centred pedagogy, as a result of the focus of primary school teachers and schools on safeguarding their reputations by achieving examination success in the CEE (Jennings, 2017). Such a focus leads to the neglect of important curriculum areas not prioritized by the CEE, for example, higher order thinking skills and other critical skills such as the ability to work as a part of a team to co-create knowledge in online as well as face-to-face contexts (Best, 2008; De Lisle, Laptiste-Francis, McMillan-Solomon and Bowrin-Williams, 2017; Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith, 2012).

Concerns about the impact of the CEE on primary school teaching and curricula have long been acknowledged (Carrington, 1993; De Lisle et al, 2017; Galloway and Upton, 1990). At the same time the increased attention paid to those students most likely to succeed in the examination, as well as the teacher-centred rather than student-centred approaches commonly pursued in order to achieve good examination results, is likely to be to the detriment of students with learning difficulties, who benefit from programs and approaches that are more tailored to meet their needs. This is likely to exacerbate patterns of disadvantage and exclusion rather than promote the inclusion of students with special educational needs (De Lisle et al, 2012; Walker and Musti-Rao, 2016). Such unintended consequences have been identified in other stratified education systems such as that in Singapore, as noted by Walker and Musti-Rao (2016, p.16).

> Although mainstream teachers are encouraged and willing to support students with special needs in classes, the emphasis on covering curricular content in preparation for the national exams does not provide adequate support to students with special needs

Alongside the unintended consequences discussed above, in such examination driven education systems, a private tutoring industry typically flourishes (often referred to in Barbados as 'lessons'). These 'lessons' are more easily accessed by economically advantaged families, with children from impoverished families more likely to miss out, or their parents placed under further economic strain (Best, 2008; Jennings. 2017). This industry also presents ethical challenges in countries, such as Barbados, where teachers with responsibility for students as part of their daytime teaching roles are also legally permitted to provide private paid tutoring to those same students, and those from other schools, outside of school hours (Bray, 2013).

In view of ongoing concerns in the community about increasing levels of violence by students from some of the less prestigious secondary schools in Barbados, it is important to consider other possible unintended consequences of a highly stratified system, as opposed to a more inclusive and equitable system that helps to promote social cohesion (Schleicher, 2014, 2018). With many students being unable to attend their nearest school and having to travel to the schools in other parts of the island for which they have gained entry, large numbers of secondary students spend considerable lengths of time travelling to and from school each day. This often involves having to take buses to school and changing buses at least once on the way to school and then again on the way back home. Students may spend up to four hours a day travelling between home and school in hot conditions on buses that are not air-conditioned with inadequate supervision. As a result of this many students arrive at their secondary schools tired before they start classes and arrive home in the evening too exhausted to concentrate on homework.

The effects of the above situation are regularly reported in local newspapers when incidents of aggression and violence arise among students at school, or riding on the buses, or waiting at bus-stops or in bus terminals (Harrison 2018, p.10). Harrison's appeal to, "…eliminate the current allocation system of bussing academically weak students to particular schools which are far away from their homes", bears very serious consideration in the context of current literature and the experiences outlined above.

Furthermore, the negative consequences of the CEE have been recognized for many years by the Government of Barbados, which in its *White Paper on Education Reform: Each One Matters... Quality Education for All,* openly admits that,

> The single summative test, such as the BSSEE, is associated with poor teaching, student misbehaviour, low motivation and fear, and thus "…exerts adverse effects on...(the) quality of education" (Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture 1995, p. 68).

Segregation within Secondary Schools – the Ongoing Impact

Gorard and Huat See (2013) emphasize that damage is caused to educationally disadvantaged groups, including students from poor homes and those with special educational needs, within highly stratified and segregated systems, where these disadvantaged groups become clustered into less prestigious schools. They suggest that this damage may be the result of a range of factors, including the restricted exposure of disadvantaged students to a broad range of peers representative of society as a whole.

Buchmann and Dalton (2002) emphasize that it is in the secondary school context where important peer group relationships are formed. Drawing on evidence from a range of educational systems, these authors posit that, in highly differentiated systems, the influence of the peer group on student attitudes and aspirations is greater than the influence of parents and teachers. In schools that limit the range of peers to which students are exposed, the aspirations of students may also be limited, affecting their educational and occupational attainment (Buchmann and Dalton 2002). Gorard and Huat See (2013) concur that where disadvantage is clustered into particular schools, and students are not exposed to a school population representative of society, exposure to positive role models and information about future opportunities may be limited. In addition, Schleicher (2014) draws attention to the many opportunities for learning that are missed by lower ability peers in situations where they are excluded from interacting with higher ability students.

Societal perceptions are also impacted by school stratification, with implications for student self-perception. This is an issue noted by Carrington (1993) in his report summarizing policy issues and concerns identified in the Caribbean community. Schleicher (2014) points out that the clustering of high ability students into more prestigious schools contributes to the creation of stereotypical views of students and serves to stigmatize students attending less prestigious schools. Such stigmatization has a negative impact on student engagement, contributing to extensive underachievement in the school population (De Lisle, et al., 2012; Galloway and Upton, 1990; Gorard and Huat See, 2013). In addition, student engagement and attainment may also be influenced by institutional practices with lower ability students, who are more likely to be assigned less well qualified and less experienced teachers than their higher ability peers (Betts and Shkolnik, 2000; Kutnick, Blatchford, Galton, and Thorp, 2005). In light of the evidence pointing to the central role of the teacher in improving educational outcomes for students (Galloway & Upton, 1990; Hattie, 2009), this is a major cause for concern.

Although the potential disadvantages of selective systems are many, such systems based on ability grouping practices are perpetuated without evidence of advantages for educational attainment (Gorard and Huat See, 2013). The following section will identify various forms of ability grouping within education systems generally and the Barbadian system specifically. The evidence for their use in promoting educational achievement will be evaluated.

Ability Grouping

Ability grouping is concerned with the way in which educational systems and schools organize instruction to meet the needs of diverse school populations (OECD, 2016). Ability grouping comprises streaming, setting and within-class grouping. While the term streaming is commonly used in Canada and the UK, this form of grouping is often referred to as tracking in the USA.

Streaming refers to the separation of students into particular groups based on their perceived overall ability. Although there are some limited opportunities for parental choice with regard to secondary school placement in Barbados, the CEE is in effect used as a national tool to stream students into a hierarchy of secondary schools. Students gaining the highest scores in the CEE are eligible for entry into the highest ranked and most prestigious schools, while those with the lowest scores are allocated to the lowest ranked and least prestigious schools. In addition, within those hierarchically based schools, further streaming of students into classes of different ability levels is also typically undertaken.

Setting is a more nuanced approach to ability grouping and refers to the practice of having students in mixed ability classes for most of their schooling while placing them in groups for particular curriculum areas, dependent on their perceived ability in that particular curriculum area. This means, for example, that while a student may be in a top set for English, that same student may be in a bottom set for Mathematics and a middle set for Spanish. Within-class grouping is a more informal approach to grouping undertaken by teachers. Teachers may, for example, place students in groups within the classroom dependent on their ability within a curriculum area, or for other reasons, such as to utilize or encourage friendship groups. Mixed-ability grouping involves randomly assigning children to classes so that there is a similar spread of abilities in all classes at each age level. Therefore, mixed-ability classes include children considered to have low, average and high ability levels, as well as those with special educational needs and disabilities.

Whether ability grouping is utilized between schools, within schools or within classes, evidence-based criteria need to be used to examine its effectiveness in order to determine whether outcomes have been improved and an appropriate trade-off between efficacy and equity has been achieved (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2005). Where there is insufficient evidence to support its effectiveness, equity may be compromised for no advantage, in the face of numerous potential disadvantages (Gorard and Huat See, 2013).

Evidence about ability grouping has been provided by two large-scale systematic reviews and meta-analyses of research studies on ability grouping in schools, which have both found that there is little research evidence for its effectiveness in raising overall levels of educational achievement. In the largest of these reviews conducted to date, Hattie (2009) found that the effect size for the impact of ability grouping was well below the average for interventions in the field of education. Whereas, in the other large-scale review (Educational Endowment Foundation, nd) the Teaching and Learning Toolkit reported that it has a negative impact on overall educational achievement. Therefore, ability grouping is not a practice that is based on research evidence for its effectiveness in improving outcomes. However, schools in many countries around the world continue to use different forms of ability grouping, despite extensive research evidence which shows that such grouping is at best ineffective and at worst harmful to students (Slavin, 1987, 1990, 1993, 1996; Schleicher, 2018).

The most detrimental form of ability grouping is considered to be when education systems, such as Barbados, use between-school streaming, with an examination to assess 'ability' around eleven years of age determining what level or type of school students will attend from then on. This between-school streaming is still used in many countries around the world and is considered to produce a high level of academic achievement for a minority of students at the expense of underachievement for the majority of students (Gorard and See, 2013; Kutnick et. al 2005).

In contrast, many countries, such as New Zealand, use within-school between-class streaming from around eleven years of age, with students assigned to classes within schools designated as high, middle and low ability. This practice is widespread in New Zealand intermediate and secondary schools, despite schools acknowledging that there appears to be little benefit for most students, and that there are negative consequences including low self-esteem and behavioural difficulties for many students (Hornby and Witte, 2014; Hornby, Witte and Mitchell, 2011). In the case of many Caribbean countries, including Barbados, within class grouping and between-class streaming are widely used in primary schools, while between-school and between-class streaming are utilized at the secondary school level, thereby compounding the negative consequences of ability grouping (Galloway and Upton, 1990).

The Need for Change

Various stakeholders agree that, despite its achievements in the past, the education system in Barbados needs to undergo significant change if it is to better meet the needs of the nation in the 21st Century (Best, 2008; Carrington, 1993; Rudder, 2014; World Bank, 2013). The system has been subject to scrutiny over many years with various reports identifying ongoing and systemic concerns.

Carrington (1993) acknowledged that one frequently raised concern relates to the continued use of the CEE as a means of streaming students into schools. Carrington (1993) also draws attention to issues of inclusion in education and society that are inter-woven with the policies of stratification by perceived ability. He posits that education needs to play a role in helping to promote societal values and to change attitudes to students with difficulties and disabilities in the Caribbean community, and that all students should be nurtured in ways that encourages tolerance and supports them to value difference and develop positive attitudes towards their peers, whatever their difficulties or disabilities. Carrington (1993, p. 31) posits that, "Such attitudes and perceptions are best nurtured in situations where all children learn in the same environment." Promoting positive attitudes to diversity of ability and need underpins the guiding philosophy of Caribbean countries that seek to ensure that each student is valued in the education system (Ministry of Education, Human Resource and Development, 2008). These values are at the heart of the international drive to promote equity and inclusion in education.

Systems that Foster Equity and High Levels of Attainment

Although the challenge of achieving educational equity and optimal educational outcomes is international in scope it has long been recognized that the situation in each country is different and therefore there is no one recipe that can be followed in order to achieve these aims (Carnoy, 1999). Increasingly, however, international studies conducted by organizations such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science (TIMSS); Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA); and, Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) are providing useful insights into interventions that are linked to improvements in educational outcomes. Therefore, implications from the findings of these studies are being used by many countries around the world to bring about changes in their education systems (Ripley, 2013; Schleicher, 2014, 2018). For example, a key factor relevant to achieving equity for students that emerged from the 2012 PISA study is that, in countries that utilize selection of students at an early age, the impact of socio-economic status on educational performance is stronger than in countries that select at a later age (Budginaite et al 2016; OECD, 2016). This indicates that later selection is related to more equitable and higher achieving education systems.

One country that has invested extensively in overhauling its education system is Finland, now internationally considered to be one of the most equitable and highest performing education systems in the world. Indeed Finland provides an example of a comprehensive, rather than selective, education system in which students are not separated into different tracks until around the age of 16 years. Finnish educational policy makers consider that, "the single most important education policy decision taken since Finland established its independence in 1917 was to create a common, untracked comprehensive school system that would serve students from all walks of life" (OECD 2011, p.131). The introduction of a comprehensive system of education is considered by most Finnish analysts to be the foundation upon which all subsequent reforms and improved educational outcomes have rested (OECD, 2011). Careful planning meant that the implementation of change was a process that took five years to complete and was marked by ongoing consultation with teachers during the planning process as well as extensive investments in teacher training to support the new system. In addition, maintaining robust in-service training programmes to allow teachers to continually update their skills was also a key focus (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, nd).

While Finland prides itself on its commitment to social and economic equity and to its system of comprehensive education, it is worth noting that, as is the case in Barbados, special classes within mainstream schools, as well as special schools, are also available for students with the most complex special educational needs and disabilities (OECD, 2011). Not only do such schools in Finland provide education to students with special needs but they are regarded as national development and service centres providing expertise and support services for other schools (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, nd). While 8% of students in Finland are deemed to have special

educational needs or disabilities, only half of these children are in special schools (OECD, 2011). So this aspect of the Barbadian education system is similar to that in Finland and need not be affected by changes to the organization of secondary schooling.

It is clear, therefore, that in order to move to a higher achieving and more inclusive and equitable education system Barbados needs to consider systemic reforms that will facilitate a move away from selective secondary schooling permeated by ability grouping, towards a more comprehensive education system.

Change from Selective Secondary Education

In order for Barbados to progress toward a more equitable and inclusive education system, with higher levels of educational achievement, there needs to be a move away from the selective secondary education that currently dominates the education scene. As emphasized by De Lisle et al. (2017), the existence of such a system of early selection and rigid academic segregation that utilizes high stakes tests, stands in contradiction to national policies in the Caribbean, including those in Barbados, that aspire to achieve an equitable education system (Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development and the Ministry of Labour, 2010). In addition, these practices are in contradiction to the central values of an inclusive education system and the goals of achieving an inclusive and equitable society (De Lisle et al., 2017; OECD, 2016). PISA results have in fact pointed to the more inclusive and equitable school systems being those that have developed comprehensive forms of education and delayed selection processes. Such systems are among the highest performing in the world, as is the case with Finland, discussed above.

Therefore, it is considered that the Barbados Ministry of Education should abandon secondary school selection by means of the CEE and introduce a zoning scheme in which all students attend the secondary school nearest to where they live, as is done in many countries with high performing education systems, such as Finland and Canada (Schleicher, 2018). This will eliminate the need for selection using the CEE, and the hours spent travelling to school each day currently taken by the majority of secondary school students. Such a scheme has the support of many Barbadians, as illustrated by recent letters to the editor of the highest circulation national newspaper by Broomes (2018) and Harrison (2018). Broomes (2018, p.4) states,

> It is nonsensical to me that at a time when we have more than enough secondary school spaces, and when there is at least one secondary school in every parish, we are still languishing in the practices that were necessary for a past that needed to function in the way to address the problems of the time, which is no longer the problem…
> I see no reason why a child from St Philip should come to school in St Michael or St James. I see no reason why a child from St Lucy should come to school in St Michael or Christ Church . . .

Further, Harrison (2018, p.10) suggests, "Let students go to the secondary schools closest to their homes, thus using the Common Entrance results to target those who need extra help in the classrooms."

Poder, Lauri and Veski (2017) in their study using 2009 PISA data showed that a zoning policy that allocated students places in their neighbourhood schools improved educational equity and reduced the effect of family background characteristics on academic achievement, while achievement based allocation increased inequity. However, these authors acknowledge the complexity of issues related to zoning and point out that it is not a panacea for all. There is a need for allocation policies to be sensitive to the local context. For example, a system of zoning will not necessarily be effective in countries where there are high levels of residential segregation. These authors suggest that in such situations zoning may exacerbate rather than reduce inequity. Zoning policies therefore need to be developed in such a way as to ensure that schools reflect the socio-economic, cultural and academic mix of the community, with the aim of the schooling system being to achieve a system of equivalent

schools so that no family feels the need to travel to any school outside of their neighbourhood (Gorard and Huat See, 2013).

Because of the long tradition of selective entry in Barbados, the prestige of older secondary schools, and the uneven socio-economic distribution of the population, implementing an effective zoning system will not be easy to achieve. It is therefore proposed that one way to make the transition to a more effective, equitable and inclusive education system in Barbados would be to introduce a small number of Sixth Form Colleges. For example, the two most prestigious secondary schools, Harrison College and Queens College, could teach students in Forms One through Five and only enrol students in their Sixth Form years who are undertaking Advanced level courses. All other secondary schools would enrol students in Forms One through Five and offer Caribbean Examination Council (CXE) programmes. Students would then get into the Sixth Form Colleges based on their passes and grades in the CXE examinations taken at the end of the Fifth Form year at around 16 years of age.

All secondary schools would need to have their own geographical zones from which they draw their students. These would need to be drawn up to ensure that schools enrol similar numbers of students and that they represent as diverse a socio-economic population as possible. Teachers could remain at the secondary schools at which they had previously taught but would need to develop their teaching strategies in order to effectively deliver the curriculum to students with a broader range of abilities than they may be used to. An advantage of this approach is that schools would become more representative of their local communities, due to children attending their local schools, which would facilitate increased involvement of parents and communities, and help bring about optimal educational outcomes (Hornby, 2011).

The impact on primary school education will be an important by-product, with teachers no longer forced to concentrate most of their efforts on preparing children to sit the CEE in classes streamed for ability from as early as seven years, but instead able to deliver a broader curriculum and focus on facilitating the learning of all children, including those with special educational needs. This new system is also likely to result in increased attendance and engagement of students, who will have more energy to devote to their studies rather than being fatigued by travelling long distances to and from school. It will also be likely to result in decreased violence and delinquency in secondary age students, due to them attending schools in their local communities, with less time spent travelling on buses and waiting at bus stops with inadequate supervision. In addition, there will be positive effects on traffic and travel across Barbados due to most students no longer needing to use buses to get to and from schools, or for some parents to drive children to primary schools with good reputations for success in the CEE.

As was the case in Finland, transition to a new educational structure will need careful planning and execution. However, the potential benefits of implementing such reforms are substantial, as suggested by the impact of changes made to the Polish education system over a relatively short time frame in 1999 (Ripley, 2013). Directly following these changes Poland improved PISA reported academic outcomes by an average of three-quarters of a school year between 2000 and 2006 (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2010). Interestingly, the change made in Poland, that was considered to be mainly responsible for this improvement, was abandoning selection at entry to secondary school, thereby delaying the division of students into various streams (Jakubowski, Patrinos, Porta and Wiśniewski, 2016).

Reforming schooling systems is a challenging and politically difficult task. Such reforms take time to implement and some benefits may not be realized until student populations move into the workforce, where they can make use of their improved education, thereby furthering national economic growth (Schleicher, 2018). Therefore, it is important to also consider the longer-term impact of educational reforms, which can be substantial (Hanusheck and Woessmann, 2010). In Barbados, reforming entry to secondary schooling would not only create a much more equitable and inclusive education system, enabling the nation to raise overall academic attainment, while reducing student behavioural problems, it would also bring about the substantial long-term economic benefits that are found to result from producing a better educated population (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2010).

Conclusion

There is a need for a change from a selective to a comprehensive secondary education system in order for Barbados to meet its goal of preparing the population for 21st century life. This will involve abolishing selection for secondary schooling at around age 11 years and having in place school zoning that enables students to attend secondary schools nearest to their homes. The advantages of this change will be a more equitable and inclusive education system that provides high quality education for all children regardless of social class or ethnicity, and that brings about improved levels of academic achievement across the secondary school sector, with lower rates of student behavior problems, as well as the substantial long-term economic benefits of producing a better educated population.

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Book Review

Languages in the Malaysian Education System: Monolingual Strands in Multilingual Settings. By Asmah Haji Omar (Ed.) (2015), 184pp. ISBN: 9781138948754, London: Routledge

Malaysia is ethnolinguistically diverse. According to *Ethnologue*, for a population of over 30 million, 134 languages are spoken within its territory, of which 112 are indigenous and 22 non-indigenous. Against this backdrop of ethnolinguistic vitality, only some of these languages figure in the formal education system either as the medium of instruction (as in the case of Malay and, for some time, English) or as a subject within the school curriculum (as in the case of Iban, Kadazandusn, Tamil, Chinese and Arabic). This edited volume, which is published under the Routledge Critical Studies in Asian Education series, provides an overview of the "positioning of these languages" within the education system, "for the purpose of integration of the Malaysian peoples" (p.1). In this regard, the "positioning" of languages within the education system is ostensibly political in nature, and is tied closely to Malaysia's postcolonial responses to the project of nation-building, of developing national unity with a population that is linguistically and also culturally and socially diverse. The book is organized in 10 chapters, each authored or co-authored by key researchers in the area.

Chapter 1 of the book, entitled 'Positioning languages in the Malaysian education system' sets out to frame the central arguments of the book. It maps out the linguistic landscape of the country and describes the historical and linguistic forces that contributed to the positioning of the Malay language as the national language. The chapter provides an overview of the different school systems in Malaysia, each with its own medium of instruction, namely Malay medium national schools and vernacular schools in which Chinese and Tamil are media of instruction, which were established in colonial Malaya in light of the migration of Chinese and Tamils into the mining and plantation sectors. The chapter also highlights the shifts in status of English medium schools, established in the colonial period but which were discontinued beginning in the 1970s. The positon of English as a "strong second language' within the school system and programmes to address this are also discussed here and taken up further in chapter 3.

Chapter 2 picks up on the case for the choice of Malay as the national language and highlights key issues in the implementation of the National Language Policy. In arguing for the case of Malay as national language, the chapter offers an historical overview of the shift involved when Malay vernacular schools in the colonial period became National schools in the post-independence era. This shift, in principle at least, indicated a shift from an ethnic focus to a national focus, where Malay served as the lingua franca for the multilingual, multiethnic polity. Even as Malay replaced English as the medium of instruction at university level, the chapter draws attention to the rise of Malay-English bilingualism not just in tertiary level education, but throughout the school system under the MBMMBI slogan. MBMMBI was an acronym for "To uphold Malay and strengthen English," indicative of the contemporary postcolonial relationship between the languages.

Chapter 3 examines the three levels which drive English usage in Malaysia: national, regional and global. At the national level the chapter traces the changes in the role of English within the education system over time; some of the policy flip-flops in recent years regarding the role of English as medium of instruction for Mathematics and Science subjects; and some of the challenges the country faces vis-à-vis English proficiency levels of graduates; some 44,000 graduate remain unemployed and their proficiency has been cited as a reason for employability. At the regional level, English has been adopted as the 'working language' within ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. And at a global level, the continuing large numbers of Malaysian students who seek tertiary education in Anglophone countries or the branch campuses of foreign universities in Malaysia as well as the

private universities, has contributed to the demand for English. The chapter ends with a note on the linguistic responses to the ongoing debates on globalization and local identities.

The next three chapters are devoted to Arabic (Chapter 4), Chinese (Chapter 5), and Tamil (Chapter 6). The status of Arabic is closely tied to its use in Islamic religious education. While there is not a native speaker community for Arabic in Malaysia, its spread has been propagated through the *madrasah* in the colonial period, and in the post-independence era it was taught in *Sekolah Agama* (religious schools), privately run *tahfiz* schools and well as in National schools where Arabic is taught as a subject. Invariably the teaching of Arabic is tied closely to Islamic religious instruction.

The Chinese language is used as a medium of instruction in Chinese vernacular schools at the primary level and in Chinese Independent schools at the secondary level, and as a subject in national schools. Its place in the education system is basically as a heritage language, though in recent years there has been an increase in non-Chinese in Chinese vernacular schools, though the numbers are relatively small. Tamil is used as a medium of instruction at the primary level and as a subject in National schools. Both Chinese and Tamil as majors at the university level and the Institutes for Teacher education prepare Chinese and Tamil teachers for the national and vernacular school systems.

The next two chapters cover Iban (Chapter 7) and Kadandusun (Chapter 8), the dominant languages in Sarawak and Sabah respectively. The chapters, taken together, present a portrait of the position and role of these indigenous languages as heritage languages, taught as POLs (pupils' own languages) within the school system. The chapters trace efforts to use the oral traditions of these languages and their folklore as curriculum content in the language classes, as well as attempts to provide a writing system for the languages and the teaching of these languages at the University level.

Chapter 9 looks at the role of translation in Malaysian education, especially crucial as Malay is the national language within the school system. The chapter examines the roles of two key agencies tasked with translating key works to and from Malay, namely the National Institute of Translation and Production of Books (known by its Malay acronym ITBN) and *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka. Dewan Bahasa* was an agency that was accorded official authority to formulate policies and programmes to propagate the Malay language, as well to translate key works and to produce lexicons and dictionaries. The role of non-governmental publishing houses in producing translated works is also discussed here.

The book concludes with a discussion in Chapter 10 of the role of Malay as a supranational or regional language in maritime Southeast Asia. Efforts at harmonizing and modernizing the spelling systems of the Malay and Indonesian languages and standardization of terminology in the two languages are discussed at length.

Taken as a whole, the book provides a valuable encyclopedic overview of the languages in Malaysia, and their presence in the education system. The various chapters flesh out the subtitle of the book: monolingual strands in multilingual settings. Invariably, the languages are seen as existing separately as distinct strands in the linguistic landscape. What is not seen in these chapters is the fluidity of the plurilingual landscape that is Malaysia, in terms of code-switching, code-mixing, the use loan words and other forms of hybridization, through crosslinguistic, cross-cultural and intercultural aspects of language use in a dynamic plurilinguistic polity. While the formal school system may tend to keep the languages as "separate strands," at least officially, there are spaces, as recent research has shown, where speakers draw on the plurilingual milieu to communicate both in the informal spaces outside classrooms but also formal classroom spaces when the language of instruction may not be readily comprehensible to some, and teachers may draw on students linguistic resources in the teaching and learning processes.

Moses Samuel
Taylor's University