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## ***Itadakimasu: Who's getting the most out of Asia Education in Australia?***

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### **Abstract**

For some time, popular and academic debate has existed in Australia as to the extent to which the nation should engage with the countries of Asia. Various State, Territory and Federal governments have established programs and funding support systems to facilitate engagement with Asia by providing related education to students.

Several Australian universities conduct preservice and inservice programs for teachers, to support the delivery of studies of Asia in schools. This paper reports on one such initiative at a university in Sydney. Students are selected on a competitive basis and sponsored by the New South Wales Department of Education and Training. A condition of acceptance into the program is demonstration of engagement with studies of Asia at the candidate's school. Several criteria are used in this determination, such as previous participation in an AEF in-country study tour, attendance at professional development sessions, conferences and the like. The course is designed to enhance students' knowledge and understandings of Asia, examine and challenge their values, and develop their skills both in the delivery of teaching studies of Asia, and in being effective change agents in their schools.

This paper reports on outcomes in two schools, one suburban and one rural, whose principals completed the course. The findings have implications for all Asia educators, and many of the outcomes may be applicable to other curricular reforms. While positive outcomes were achieved in both schools, it may be that the Graduate Certificate course adopted a one-size-fits-all approach, with insufficient regard for the needs of rural and isolated schools. The purpose of this paper is to stimulate debate on the provision of appropriate inservicing in Asia education, especially for teachers outside capital cities. The word *itadakimasu* in the title is a transliteration of a Japanese term inviting someone to eat, similar to the French borrowing *bon appétit* used in English, the assertion being that some people have greater access to the banquet than others.

### **Introduction**

An important measure of the success of inservice education is the extent to which, and ways in which it changes the practice of teachers, their schools and communities. This study investigates the effects of completion of a Graduate Certificate in Teaching Studies of Asia that I coordinate. It constitutes case studies of two schools, both Catholic, whose principals

graduated from the course. The project sought advice from these principals, as well as other staff members of their schools where possible. Views were sought on ways in which each principal's participation in the course has facilitated change in the school, with regard to studies of Asia. This information is being used to inform the effectiveness of the course, and ways in which it might be modified or strengthened, with a view to maximising and supporting effective and desirable change for future participants.

One major intended outcome of the Graduate Certificate in Teaching Studies of Asia under discussion here, is the effective promotion of studies of Asia in participants' schools. Hargreaves (1994) outlines a number of conditions which maximise the extent and effectiveness of curricular change. Such conditions include the perception and reality that the teachers are involved in and 'own' the proposed change, and that they are justified in the belief that they have some influence in the proposals. Many of these conditions are dependent upon the will of the school's Principal. It is for this reason that participating principals were asked to take part in this study.

## **Background and Literature Review**

For a number of compelling reasons, it is in Australia's interest to engage with its neighbouring countries in Asia. These factors include Australia's demography, geography, economics and arguably, its history and ongoing security. The education of Australia's young people is a crucial link in this process (FitzGerald, 1991). This, in turn, depends on the development on the part of Australia's school teachers of 'Asia capital' (Asia Education Foundation, 1995), that is, the knowledge and understandings of the countries and cultures of Asia, the skills required for effective engagement as well as the acquisition of values and perspectives appropriate for an empathic understanding of the region and of Australia's roles within it. Various governments in Australia have devised initiatives in order to promote studies of Asia in schools (Henderson, 2004).

As asserted by Hargreaves (1994) among others, change in schools involves a complex set of processes. In the context of competing demands and a crowded curriculum, it is tempting for teachers to ignore pressures and imperatives to adjust the content of their teaching. In any context, the curriculum is a contested and complex phenomenon. Brady and Kennedy (2003, p. 5) illustrate the breadth of understandings of the term 'curriculum' by offering a selection of definitions, without appearing to privilege any one of them. These definitions range from Marsh and Willis' (1995) "interrelated set of plans and experiences that a student undertakes under the guidance of the school", to Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubaman (1995) "what the older generation chooses to tell the younger generation".

Brady and Kennedy (2003) also discuss the question of ownership of the curriculum, primarily investigating the influence of government in its construction. Beyond this, the curriculum is contested in the *intra*-school context. Groundwater-Smith and White (1995), investigate the *what* of curriculum (its priorities and silences, inconsistencies, implementation etc.) while Gerber (1995) examines the *who* (that is, the players, their roles and resultant outcomes). This

study attempts to take into account both factors.

In Australia, this resistance to curricular change can be compounded by an antipathy towards studies of Asia (Broinowski, 1992; FitzGerald, 1997). As suggested above, stated government policy has not always successfully negotiated the cross-over into popular thinking and practice. Fry, Baumgart, Elliott and Martin (1995) noted that the study of Asia in Australian schools had not fared well. It had largely been relegated to studies of languages and the social sciences. Subsequent research (Baumgart, Halse & Buchanan, 1998; Buchanan, 2002; 2003; Halse, 1999) has suggested that while some admirable initiatives have been undertaken, deeper understanding of Asia on the part of students is not widespread.

In order to address concerns about Asia literacy levels among Australian students, the COAG (Council of Australian Governments), in 1994, established NALSAS (the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools) Strategy, whose funding has been used to support a number of educational initiatives at primary, secondary and tertiary levels (NALSAS, 2004). One initiative sponsored by NALSAS funding has been the Graduate Certificate in Teaching Studies of Asia, which I coordinate. A primary aim of this undertaking has been the facilitation of curricular change in the schools, members of whose staff have completed the course. Assessment and in-class tasks have been tailored with this aim in mind. The central aim of this research project is to investigate the extent to which, and ways in which participation in the Graduate Certificate has influenced curriculum in two schools whose principals completed the course.

The course is presented in mixed mode delivery with two intensive on-campus workshops, during which students undertake field trips, hear from experts in various facets of Asia, Asia education in the Australian context, including practitioners, and experts in curricular and school development. Workshops incorporate discussion of effective teaching practices, and demonstration of recent relevant resources, including specific uses of particular resources. A number of these resources, which were produced by the Asia Education Foundation and Curriculum Corporation, were provided for participants, and were critically evaluated by students, as were other resources. Topics addressed pedagogical content, such as entry points in existing syllabus documents for studies of Asia, as well as background knowledge for teachers. Students were also directed to investigate the dynamics of effecting school and curricular change. Assessment tasks included the devising of a two-to-five year action plan for the school, and the implementation of at least one item of the action plan at school. This was designed to increase the probability of real change, and to allow action plans to gain some momentum in the participants' schools.

The on-campus sessions are supported by readings, assessment tasks and some online communication, over a period of twelve months, the students completing two subjects per semester. The students were sponsored by the New South Wales Department of Education and Training, using Federal Government funding. To date, two cohorts of students have completed the course.

## **Methodology**

### ***Data collection***

The research took the form of a pair of comparative case studies, involving the principals of two NSW schools, one suburban and one rural. The principals of these schools had recently completed the Graduate Certificate in Teaching Studies of Asia. Data were collected primarily by means of interview/conversation (see Appendix) and document analysis. The two principals were interviewed, as well as two teachers in one of the schools. In discussions with the Principals, it was decided that parents would have difficulty attributing any changes in curriculum to the course, as studies of Asia were being undertaken at the schools prior to the Principals' enrolment. Artefacts such as curriculum documents, school policies and student work samples were also examined. Interviews were tape recorded for later selective transcription, and extensive field notes were taken during interviews and conversations. Names used here are pseudonyms. The names St Urban and its Principal, Sid, have been chosen for their suggested association with suburban Sydney, to avoid the need for cross-referencing.

### ***Data analysis***

Field notes which derived from the interviews were analysed for in/consistencies between different informants' perspectives, in the case of the suburban school. More broadly, the two schools were compared for an analysis of contextual issues that may or may not be common to each. Interview data were also investigated for matches and mismatches with other documents and with apparent espoused practice. The components of the report pertinent to each school were provided, in draft form, to each principal for him to disseminate to the staff and others as deemed fit. The data were then aggregated according to themes with regard to strengths and potential improvements to the course.

## **Findings**

### ***The two schools***

St Urban Catholic Primary School is located in Sydney's outer western suburbs. While the area enjoys moderate levels of affluence, it is not in one of Sydney's wealthier areas, and is subjected at times to negative media and popular stereotyping. The school has a significant body of students of Asian background. There is a large and growing Chinese community in the local diocese, while Koreans are another significant group. The school also caters for a significant number of Somali and other refugees, who speak little or no English upon arrival.

Enrolments are declining at present, in line with an aging local demographic, but this is expected to change in years to come, as younger families move into the area. In recent years, a 'stage' rather than a grade approach to teaching has been implemented. In NSW, each stage corresponds to two grades of the school. Four teachers from St Urban School have attended the Graduate Certificate course.

St Martin's is a one-teacher Catholic primary school in a rural community of about 300 people, approximately equidistant, a four-and-a-half-hour drive, from Sydney and Melbourne.

Culturally and psychologically, however, it seems a long way from both cities. Nevertheless, by Australian standards, it is not particularly isolated.

Upon arriving at St Martin's I parked the car next to the only other car on the school grounds. This lack of cars should not have surprised me, in the context of a one-teacher primary school – even though many of the students probably know how to drive, and have been doing so for years on their farms. The area was looking surprisingly lush, a “green drought” according to Dale, the school Principal. While there had been sufficient rain for plants to grow, there was little water in local dams. Most of the school's 13 students (of whom a majority are boys) are from local sheep or cattle farms, the others living in town, which is a service centre for the agricultural industry, and provides services for traffic passing between Sydney and Melbourne. All of the students and most of the townspeople consider themselves to be (Anglo-)Australian. The only local person of Asian descent whom Dale could identify was the Chinese chef at the local RSL (Returned Servicemen's League) club. Difficult conditions climatically and lower commodity prices have resulted in some economic hardships in the community. A significant proportion of the population tends to be transient. Dale has the help of a part-time teacher for two days a week, as well as a part-time teacher's assistant.

### ***Positive reflections***

Both principals praised the course and its contribution to their understanding of Asia. They found the guest lecturers interesting, stimulating, and varied in terms of their expertise and approaches. They also valued the opportunity to exchange ideas and plans with one another, and found the assessment tasks (to be discussed later) relevant and thought-provoking.

Both schools have subsequently provided school-wide Asia learning experiences for their students, such as ‘Chinafest’, a study and celebration of Chinese cultures, languages and geography, at St Urban, and a Japanese cultural day at St Martin's, in which parents cooked a meal while students tutored their parents on matters of Japanese etiquette. Dale took his students to Melbourne, where they visited Chinatown, the Chinese Museum and a Chinese restaurant. He noted that for some of the accompanying parents, it was their first trip to that city.

While Sid felt that it was beneficial to have several staff members completing the course, it is not essential. He and the other staff members agreed, however, that having the principal ‘on side’ is an important part of the moral and financial support of Asia programs. Tracey and Angela at St Urban felt that it was beneficial to share their ideas and plans from the course with each other. Sid suggested encouraging more school principals to complete the course.

Dale in particular praised the inclusion and nature of the on-campus sessions. This is perhaps unsurprising, given the relative isolation of his teaching circumstances. Both informants admitted to nervousness at the prospect of delivering assessable learning experiences to their peers, and Tracey, a teacher at St Urban, described the experience as “terrifying”, but all felt that this was a beneficial form of assessment, particularly as they were able to experience other teachers' ideas in action. Choice of assessment topics also allowed the students to pursue their interests and demonstrate and build on their expertise. Dale also explained that, compared to a course he had undertaken subsequently, the assessment in the Graduate Certificate had

been done promptly, allowing for reflection prior to the submission of subsequent assessment tasks. The respondents also found the assessment tasks to be practical and relevant to the business of building Asia capital in their schools and in themselves, as well as in developing their potential in leading and facilitating change in their schools.

Despite these positives, it is worth keeping in mind that the Certificate course forms only a part of these teachers' experiences of Asia. Both principals, as well as other staff members at St Urban, have travelled to various destinations in Asia, on study and teaching tours organised by the Asia Education Foundation. These have been important in raising the teachers' credibility, knowledge stock and authority as Asia educators. Sid commented that to maximise the effects of such tours, that the participants would need to maintain contact with their Australian school and the community 'in real time', by sending emails, digital photos etc during their journey, as well as maintaining contact with the host schools and communities in Asia with ongoing contact from Australia. There was universal agreement that in-country experiential learning is more permanent than traditional inservicing. Tracey said with regard to this type of first-hand experience, "at uni, that lesson can't be taught". While all respondents saw benefits of in-country experiences as opposed to those in the classroom, this raises financial questions. Meeting the costs both of tuition and travel-related expenses would be debilitating and a disincentive for many students. One option is perhaps to negotiate a research project and a destination, including a host school or other institution, for students.

When conducting research into one's own teaching, one hopes to encounter positive responses from students. Indeed, the students obliged, offering praise for the course. While this was pleasing, there remained lingering doubts as to the effectiveness of the course in engendering a deep understanding of things Asian, which led to a critical self-evaluation of the related processes and content, as outlined in Buchanan (in press).

#### ***Delivery of teaching – catalysts and inhibitors***

For both principals, an increase in content knowledge has contributed not only to more informed teaching, but to a more authentic and confident delivery. Sid commented, "I think we've become far more informed, and not just 'there's a blackline stencil master book, and let's just run 'em all off'." Sid added that readings and discussions during the course on stereotyping had contributed to a richer approach to the teaching of Asia. Another outcome of this was a more empathic understanding of the various ethnic groups represented at the school, not just those of Asian background. Sid conceded that there was still considerable scope for the staff to increase their familiarity with Asia. The relationship between knowledge and confidence is not a simple one, however, and Sid noted that he and his staff had become more tentative and discerning in their approach to teaching about Asia. "We're a bit more careful in how we do things. We stop before we rush into doing things". While such hesitation on the part of staff may seem at odds with the goal of increased confidence in the delivery of Asia material, it is heartening to observe this increased discernment on the part of teachers.

In both schools, it appears that the students are receptive to studies of Asia, but Sid feels that despite the advent of an increasingly multicultural Australia, there is still a conceptual divide amongst students, many of whom lack a sense of place, in terms of Asia with regard to

Australia. While sitting next to a child of different ethnic background appears to have overcome many cultural stereotypes for Australia's young people, it has not necessarily broadened these children's sense of place. "Those children who are Asian take that for granted that they come from that part of the world. It's just part of their story, whereas for the Anglo-Saxon blond-headed child in year five . . . this doesn't mean very much". Dale also recounted an isolated incident of a year three student who blamed all religious wars on Muslims. Despite being genuinely taken aback by this comment, he described his dealing with it as "delicate", a necessity given the closeness of the community, and the resultant relative publicness of his teaching.

Sid noted that the inclusion of five 'world religions' as mandated by the New South Wales syllabus document, provides an important entry point for the studies of Asia. The five religions include Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism, but the Syllabus also provides scope for study of other religions such as Sikhism. While the study of faiths other than Catholicism is not a vexed question for Sid, he noted that some Catholic schools have encountered parental resistance to such study.

There is also a tension, according to Sid, between teachers using ready-made teaching materials, as opposed to developing their own materials, which advances their own creativity and caters better for the individual needs of their students. He noted that with added confidence, teachers at St Urban have begun to create their own materials. Lack of time, however, remains an ongoing inhibitor in this process.

Sid also explained that fields such as intercultural understanding are at times displaced by the importance accorded to the 'basic skills' of literacy and numeracy, and that these social expectations are "impinging upon the ability of the classroom teacher to teach across the agenda". In similar vein, Tracey, at St Urban, noted that it is not straightforward to achieve an across-the-board implementation of studies of Asia. When she transferred from a year five to a year two class, she realised that the latter had little experience of studies of Asia, and she is currently developing further studies for year two. While this is now being addressed in Tracy's year two class, it suggests that the influence of the course has not spread beyond participants' classes to the extent that would be desirable. Teachers other than the participants were not made available for interview.

External factors also impinge on both schools. Some educators in Sid's opinion see enjoyment and learning as mutually exclusive pursuits, and consider computers to be for entertainment purposes only. The curriculum at Sid's school is largely subject to decisions made externally. Dale, by contrast, enjoys relative freedom in curriculum content. There is a community expectation, however, that his students will study the Country Women's Association-nominated country of the year. The designated country was Chile in 2004, and Dale cannot recall an Asian country being nominated by the CWA. Both Sid and Dale noted that their local dioceses are very supportive of studies of Asia.

Dale provided some interesting insights into one of the assignments. As mentioned previously, having completed and received feedback on an 'action plan' for their school, the students

were required to enact and evaluate one aspect of the plan they had devised. Many of the students were required to resubmit this assignment, having failed to actually enact an aspect of the plan, but rather restating one aspect, and their plans to enact it. It was considered that this was due to a hesitation on the part of the students to actually carry out part of the plan. Indeed, the task was designed to combat this, and to transform the 'energy' of the action plan from potential to kinetic, and to develop the action plan's momentum. Dale said, however, that he genuinely believed that he had met the criteria for the second assignment when he submitted it. He said, "I remember at the time [of writing] thinking, I've already done this". As a result of these comments, the wording of the assignment on the subject outline will be revisited and refined.

An understanding of "how kids learn" according to Sid is central to curriculum development, and this could be included, even in the form of further reading, in the course.

### ***The contributions of technology***

Both principals suggested that the course could further devote itself to the application of technology in the classroom. Dale observed "it looks easy when the expert does it, but can we reproduce this back at school?" It is worth noting that the rooms in which the course is conducted have access to a level of technology not commonly available in school classrooms. Sid commented, however, that while the internet had helped with access to information, it is simply one more representation of a reality, and no substitute to travelling to the country concerned, or meeting its people.

Sid noted that computer technology provides access to information, both for students' learning and for the presentation of their learning, as well as a source of powerful motivation for students, despite the initial potential for distraction of, for example, PowerPoint's "bells and whistles" for children. Indeed, the school has an attractive and informative page on its intranet which outlines *inter alia*, Chinafest, and work samples from year five on Japan, compiled using PowerPoint software (and inclusive the program's every sound effect). Sid attributed the development and high standard of this intranet site to the dedication and expertise of a number of staff members. The school has taken part in an upskilling of staff in matters of technology.

Dale suggested uploading student presentations online. On the other hand, a number of the students were resistant to using online communication, and at student request, an online assessment component was abandoned. This has implications not only for the delivery of the Certificate course, but for delivery of related material by these teachers in their schools. While the cohort is small, student resistance appeared to be stronger among rural teachers. This has interesting and potentially disturbing implications given that online communication has been vaunted as an equaliser with regard to urban and rural communities. While none of the informants complained about library and other access during this project, there was disquiet about inequity from some students from rural schools during the course with regard to accessing such facilities.

### ***The community as a resource***

Both principals observed that school-community relationships are probably the area that has the greatest potential for further development. Sid felt that the school hadn't "tapped into the community as much as it could", and suggested addressing this as part of the course. There had been the "token" discussion of students' countries of origin, but little beyond that. With regard to the Asia Graduate Certificate, addressing this need for rural schools like St Martin's is particularly problematic, in that there are few sources of information in the immediate vicinity. Time and attention could be devoted during the Certificate course to identifying options for such isolated schools, and the corresponding support mechanisms needed for the school. For example, opportunities do exist not too far from St Martin's. Within a two-hour drive there can be found Japanese gardens, a museum commemorating Chinese contributions to and conflicts in the gold rushes, a variety of Asian restaurants and at least one mosque. Canberra, offering many options, is about two-and-a-half hours' drive away. Nevertheless, excursions are time-, energy- and money-costly, especially for a community that is not economically buoyant, and it is all too easy for outsiders to oversimplify problems and solutions. During the on-campus sessions, field trips were conducted to Sydney's Chinatown, near the campus, and to Cabramatta, a suburb of Sydney with a high proportion of Indo-Chinese expatriates. Such experiences are probably tantalisingly out of reach for schools like St Martin's. While electronic means may provide some responses to these difficulties - the diocese has links with Ishiwakura in Japan - Dale observed that without intervention "it would be easy for children to complete their primary education without any exposure at all to Asian cultures. It is not necessarily a matter of avoiding Asia, but of neglecting it by default".

Involvement of parents at both schools is problematic, but perhaps more so in the suburban school, where there may be less of a sense of community, and where parents invest long periods of time commuting to and from work. Sid explained that often parallel after-school and evening meetings need to be offered to parents, which presents a burden in terms of the demands on teachers' time. Tracey presented information to parents about a study and teaching tour she had undertaken to India, but was disappointed with the number of parents who attended. Using an environmental analogy, it can be asserted that school-community collaborations need to be symbiotic and sustainable. As with field trips, the development and maintenance of partnerships with the community is a costly business in terms of time and energy, even though resultant partnerships may prove to be richly rewarding as well as time-saving in the long-term.

### ***Theory and practice***

While both principals noted the relevance of assessment tasks, they also commented that more in-class time could be devoted to 'the business of schools' such as developing Asia-inclusive scope and sequence documents and integrating Asia content into existing learning experiences and units of work. This raises some tensions in that it is at odds with devoting class time to the deepening of conceptual understandings of Asia. One alternative is to include this as an assessment task. In any case, students need to be made aware of the mandate for *whole-school* change. Students could be encouraged, again, perhaps by way of assessable tasks, to lead and train other staff members in the development of whole-school curricular documents inclusive of studies of Asia.

***Plans for the future, and 'after sales service'***

Sid indicated that the next step in school and staff development will be the production of an integrated scope and sequence document incorporating most key learning areas, while Dale intends to develop further cross-curricular nation-based studies of Asia. Dale in particular lamented the absence of a graduation ceremony for the students, or of an on-campus session at the completion of the course. Such an event would serve as "a fitting climax to the course and provide a sense of closure". For the University, ongoing commitment to and contact with past students is an important consideration, and needs to be addressed in the context of the competing demands of responsibilities to subsequent students. While related costs and demands for more remote students led to a decision to minimise on-campus sessions, it may be that the benefits outweigh the costs for these students in particular.

It appears that the provision of further opportunities for peer interaction, both during and after the course, is a priority for these and other Graduate Certificate students. While this may appear *prima facie* as highly labour-intensive for university staff in the context of other demands on time, this could perhaps be effected with varying degrees of student initiative, and incentives could conceivably be built in to subsequent subjects in the completion of a masters degree. As part of this process, graduates of the course could be invited to address current students. 'Reunions' would be relatively easy to organise. These might take the form of an informal get-together over dinner, affording the opportunity for participants to share ideas and plans with each other. More problematic but potentially valuable could be the organization of get-togethers of children from the schools whose staff members participated in the course. Such get-togethers could involve a theme, competitions or other stimuli for learning and interaction.

**Conclusions - the Course in Context**

While the participants derived satisfaction from the course, it is worth keeping in mind the contributions of an experience such as the Asia Graduate Certificate in terms of both its capacity and its limitations; that is, what it did and didn't achieve. The four respondents who had travelled to Asia said that these experiences were more memorable and life-changing than was the Graduate Certificate. This is not surprising, and it would perhaps be unrealistic to expect the outcome to be otherwise. Nevertheless, it is worth noting the costs and benefits of each approach, or of a combination. Another consideration in these matters is that of student autonomy, that is, the extent to which students are responsible for the realisation of positive post-graduate outcomes.

The structure of the course provides an incentive for further study. At the completion of the Graduate Certificate, Dale felt encouraged at the thought of having "half a Masters [degree]", and has since completed his MEd at another university, using the subjects of the Graduate Certificate as recognised prior learning. The course appears to have been a confidence-booster for many of the students, whose hopes that "I can do this" were vindicated. To a certain extent, these post-Certificate opportunities may address the expressed need for ongoing academic and other support for our graduates, but as this may not be an option for all, the development

and evaluation of alternatives would be worthwhile. Further research also has the potential to uncover the school outcomes for non-principals who undertake the course.

The two schools are characterised more by their differences than by their similarities. The delivery of the course would do well to foreground related differences in topic-related 'pedagogical capital', for each school, that is the nature and extent of community resources, student prior knowledge and experiences etc, which can be called upon to support a particular subject or topic of study. Just as the countries of Asia can appear, or be made to appear, quaint through 'Australian' eyes, so my account of the two schools earlier in this paper betrays the apparent quaintness of St Martin's to me. By contrast, St Urban looked much like the school I attended as a child, also in western Sydney, leading to a normalisation of St Urban from my perspective.

As stated earlier, Sid observed that his students don't have a strong sense of how their ancestry situates them, in regional or global contexts, despite their mingling with children from a variety of backgrounds. So, the classroom which may appear to the teacher or other observer to have a rich and sophisticated understanding of interculturality, may in fact house an anthology of parallel stories, whose narrators have little sense of intertextuality or mutual understanding. If this is so in suburban Sydney, it is more likely to be the case for students at St Martin's.

Of the two schools, it appears that St Urban has achieved more, and is poised to achieve more with regard to studies of Asia. This is not intended as a criticism at all of St Martin's, nor are these comments designed to undermine or dismiss as facile the very real achievements of St Urban, but St Urban started with greater Asian pedagogical capital in terms of its diverse student body and local community, and its relative proximity to Sydney. Also, four teachers from St Urban have now completed the course, whereas Dale is largely a solo teacher-Principal. As stated above, this is not meant to be a grading on the curve of each school, and both schools' achievements are impressive in context, but it raises a very real problem for educators in Australia, in catering for the needs of a variety of schools and communities, and in redressing the Asia capital imbalance. There is no intention in this paper to pity students who live in rural areas. Naturally, the lifewide learning they encounter and the pedagogical capital they have at their disposal are every bit as rich and valid as those in the city – they're just different. With regard to regional and global understandings, however, it would appear that the city provides greater potential with regard to incidental and informal learning. Inservice providers need to take these differences into account when developing their programs. Moreover, Dale has made use of the *social* capital exists in the town, and flow of information at St Martin's has been different to that at St Urban. An example of this two-way flow of information was the provision by parents of food, in return for tuition about matters of Japanese culture. Course organisers would do well to promote - and learn from - such a model, in presenting the course.

As yet, the internet's potential as an equaliser for urban and rural communities does not seem to have been realised. It is plausible that this imbalance may diminish in the near future, but as new technologies arise, the isolation-gap or -lag may persist or increase. Possible ways forward may include twinning arrangements between rural and urban schools, to allow a two-way sharing of perspectives and experiences. A fuel-economical way of doing this may be to

inbuild it into assessment regimes for both the Certificate students and for those who continue to complete the Master of Education course.

If outcomes in schools are a measure of the success of a program, the Asia Graduate Certificate has been successful, and has the potential to be more so, as it takes into account the contextual constraints and potentials for learning enhancement of both students and teachers. Dale's Japanese meal is an interesting metaphor for Asia education in Australia. How do we ensure everyone has reasonable access to the feast?

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