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DO TEACHERS REGARD AUSTRALIA AS PART OF ASIA? AN EDUCATIONAL AND POLITICAL DILEMMA

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ABSTRACT

Current Federal and State government policy seeks to locate Australia economically, politically and socially within Asia. Some of the most strategic initiatives have been in education and included the teaching and learning of Asian languages, cross-curricula Studies of Asia, and related resource development. The success of such programs depends not only on teachers' knowledge about Asian peoples and countries but also their degree of inter-cultural understanding.

This paper reports on a national project which investigated the views of teachers about Australia and selected Asian countries. The study drew on inter-disciplinary literature to construct a conceptual framework encompassing the world views of different cultures and providing the basis for an instrument to illuminate teachers' perspectives on peoples, countries and cultures of the region.

The investigation of "Inter-Cultural Understanding in Education" (identified by the acronym I-CUE) analysed key I-CUE variables from a sample of teachers across Australia. The findings provide some surprising insights into teachers' views and I-CUE on Asia and Australia which suggest that teachers' perspectives are a constraint in the development of students' inter-cultural understanding.

Such findings pose a political and educational dilemma. Mayer argued that cultural understanding ought be an essential outcome for school leavers but the I-CUE study indicates that more fundamental issues must be addressed. Given international trends towards globalisation, the national priority on bridging the Australia-Asia gulf and the multi-cultural profile of local classrooms, the I-CUE findings highlight the urgency of implementing strategies which foster teachers' inter-cultural understanding.

AUSTRALIA'S CHANGING RELATIONSHIP WITH ASIA

Since World War II, changing strategic alliances, the decline of old trading markets, the growth of dynamic Asian economies, and altered migration patterns have led Australia to redefine itself and its position in the Asian region.
The Federal Government's micro-economic reforms have focused on developing access to Asian markets and economies. Australia's involvement in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum highlights her economic reorientation (Fry et al., 1995, p.5). Asia is now Australia's major trading partner (responsible for 60% of Australian exports and 50% of imports) and conducts more trade with Asia than any other country in the world (Watson, 1995 citing an OECD report).

Migration has changed the ethnic profile of Australia. Over five million migrants have come to Australia from more than 120 different countries since World War 2. In 1995, one in four Australians are from non-English speaking backgrounds, and four in ten are migrants or the children of migrants (Armstrong, 1995). Whilst European immigrants still constitute the largest proportion of Australia's migrant population, the situation is changing. In 1991-92, Hong Kong was the second-largest source of immigrants after Britain and the number of Korean, Filipino and Chinese immigrants more than doubled between the 1986 census and that in 1991 (Nieuwenhuysen, 1995).

Asia is becoming part of the human face of Australia. Future projections suggest that within 23 years, 10 to 15 percent of the Australian population will have been born in Asia (Brown, 1995). With respect to Sydney, it is estimated that by the year 2020, 18 percent of Sydney's population will be Asia born (Mellor, 1995).

IMPORTANCE OF INTER-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN A CHANGING WORLD: CONSEQUENCES FOR EDUCATION

Drawing on the work of Said (1978), Singh (1995, p.5) noted "the inescapable complicity between educational knowledge and socio-economic power". As a consequence, the changing relationship between Australia and Asia has significant implications for the future. Australian encounters with Asia will increase, future employment will increasingly depend on links with Asia, and Australia's political and strategic security will hinge on finding ways to work with Asia (Watson, 1995).

Accommodation of a closer future between Australia and Asia will require an increasing emphasis on studies of Asia in Australian curricula. Integral to such studies will be a greater familiarity with Asian communities and understanding of the values of Asian cultures. Finn (1991) identified "cultural understanding" as one of the key employment-related competencies needed by school leavers, and recent national studies have emphasised the need for Australian students to be Asia literate. In 1988, the Asian Studies Council (ASC) report, A National Strategy for the Study of Asia in Australia, argued for the provision of broad-based, comprehensive learning experiences across the curriculum. The following year, recognising the linked futures of the
two continents, the Australian Education Council (AEC) urged states and territories to incorporate Asian perspectives across the curriculum and develop Asia-focused curriculum materials.

Governments have endorsed this position and provided funding to support the Asia-related education initiatives. In 1992, the Asia Education Foundation (AEF), a consortium of the University of Melbourne's Asia-link Centre and the Curriculum Corporation, was granted $3.5 million over three years from the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) to promote studies of Asia across the curriculum areas through strategic development in a national group of Magnet Schools, teacher education programs and support, materials development, and a range of partnership initiatives. In 1994, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), a meeting of heads of national and state governments, provided extensive funding for the teaching of four priority Asian languages (those of China, Japan, Indonesia and Korea), supported by appropriate cultural studies.

THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY: RECENT THEORISING ABOUT INTER-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN EDUCATION

Underpinning these recent educational initiatives is a conviction that culture plays a central role in shaping people's perceptions, understanding and interactions with their world, and the worlds of others. In education, two schools of theorising permeate recent conceptualisations of culture and the dynamics of inter-cultural relations. The first view emphasises globalisation and focuses on the common values and needs of cultures. Globalists see a metaphorically shrinking world, which is dependent on cross-cultural collaboration to protect dwindling resources, sustain a fragile environment and foster international harmony (Aspin, 1993; Tomlinson, 1995; Sarre, 1995). Hence, a key role for education is to overcome differences by developing common values and behaviours to meet global goals and needs (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Globalisation incorporates common elements of cultures A and B

The second school of theorising emphasises the preservation of cultural difference (Corson, 1995). It is explicit in the concern for cultural diversity in current state policies on Aboriginal and Multicultural Education, and national initiatives on "Studies of Asia: A Statement for Australian schools". This school argues that the fundamental incompatibility of cultures renders them vulnerable to cultural imperialism or dilution (Quine, 1964). Hence, preserving cultural diversity requires isolation and/or protection from corrupting, alien cultures (Harris, 1990), and inter-cultural understanding can only be safeguarded if members of one culture undergo a "perspective
transformation" to enable them to see and understand the world as done by other cultures (Taylor, 1994).

Figure 2. Cultural diversity emphasises and preserves difference

DILEMMAS FOR CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION THEORISING

Both frameworks carry potential dilemmas for cultural identity and inter-cultural understanding. Globalisation is pregnant with the possibility that cultural identity can be undermined through "cultural stripping" (Rosaldo, 1989) or the development of hybrid or melange cultures. The cultural difference school preserves cultural integrity but fails to point the way towards inter-cultural understanding. Hence, the respective emphases on commonality and difference offer divergent pathways with limited, if any, meeting points.

IDENTIFYING I-CUE: INTER-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN EDUCATION

Our research endeavours to reconcile the dilemmas embodied in globalisation and difference by proposing the existence of a third, alternative pathway. Identified by the acronym I-CUE (Inter-Cultural Understanding in Education), we have developed a new model to identify the intersection and divergence between the world views (WV) of different cultures. A world view derives from culturally embedded and shared ways of knowing, valuing and understanding. It shapes the way individuals perceive and define their own identity and their relationship with the world around them. By recognition of the intersections and differences in world views, a sounder conceptual basis can be established for meaningful inter-cultural understanding and interaction which recognises and preserves cultural difference and diversity.

The model was developed as the result of a pilot study in 1995. The model as depicted in Figure 3 shows the WV perceptions of respondents from culture A about their own and a second culture (B). Similarly, respondents from B report on their perceptions of the national characteristics of B and A. Hence, A1 and B1 represent those elements of WV which are shared and perceived as shared, thereby resulting in I-CUE and the potential for globalisation without cultural dilution. A2 and B2 represent WV elements which are shared yet perceived as different - signalling a current lack of I-CUE but with scope for educative intervention. A3 and B3 represent different WV elements which are falsely perceived as shared due to lack of I-CUE and a shallow view of globalisation. A4 and B4 represent divergent WV elements which should be recognised as different and culturally distinctive.
Key:

- \( a_1 \) and \( b_1 \) = shared elements perceived as shared
- \( a_2 \) and \( b_2 \) = shared elements perceived as different
- \( a_3 \) and \( b_3 \) = different elements perceived as shared
- \( a_4 \) and \( b_4 \) = different elements perceived as different

**Figure 3.** I-CUE is deduced from perceptions of own and other cultures

By exploring the world view perceptions, the model provides a dynamic context for comprehending the polyvocal discourses, cultures, experiences and historical specificities of different groups (McLaren, 1994). The model does not propose a new universal metanarrative. Nor does it reject the concept of diversity and difference. However, it does seek to develop an understanding of totality in order to counter-balance the fragmentation of the poststructuralist/postmodern emphasis on difference and discontinuity (Best, 1989; McLaren, 1994), and to provide a framework for facilitating understanding of "the 'difficult whole' of a pluralized and multi-dimensional world" (Murphy, 1991).

This paper reports on only one side of the I-CUE model (the perceptions of Australian teachers) and one method of data collection (quantitative). In a study to be conducted in 1996 under an ARC Small Grant, the researchers will test the veracity of the complete model through the world view perceptions of Japanese and Thai teachers as well as Australian teachers using a combination of methodologies to facilitate explanations and interpretations of commonalities and differences. As a consequence, the research will seek to validate, modify or extend the theory underlying I-CUE.

**THE SAMPLE**

As part of a broader evaluation study, the data reported here were collected from a national sample of 214 teachers about to embark on a professional development program on teaching about Asia across the curriculum. The sample included teachers from government and non-government schools and from primary and secondary sectors. Some of the pertinent characteristics of the sample are shown in Table 1. A high proportion (88 percent) of the teachers in the sample were from primary schools and their country of birth and qualifications were broadly representative of teachers in this sector, although in age they were somewhat younger than the national teaching population.

**Table 1. Characteristics of the Respondent Group of Teachers (N = 214)**

**THE INSTRUMENT**
The instrument used in the present study was an exploratory one and feedback from respondents is being used to restructure the format of the instrument and to revise its content. In the original instrument design, content validity was sought by writing items to reflect broadly the literature on world views, drawing on the seminal work of Kluckhohn (1951) and subsequent developments on world view in counselling psychology (Ibrahim, 1991; Ibrahim & Owen, 1994), psychology (Sue, 1978), philosophy (Prawat & Floden, 1994), sociology (Helms & Carter, 1990), and education (Taylor, 1994). Four conceptual groupings were identified as broadly inclusive of previous conceptualisations (Jackson & Meadows, 1991).

These groupings and the kinds of world view questions associated with them are as follows.

A. Nature of Reality and the World (Ontology): "Ways of Seeing"

Do people overcome the physical world or are they subject to it? Is a high or a low value placed on possession of material goods? Is status allied to consumption and to individual achievement, or is the world perceived through one's place in a community? Is the world perceived literally or is there an emphasis on the symbolic? Is the locus of control perceived as largely external to an individual or is the nature of reality allied to an internal locus of control?

B. Nature of Knowledge and Reasoning (Epistemology): "Ways of Knowing"

Is knowledge seen as authoritative, immutable, information-based, teacher given, and providing unique solutions? Or is it flexible, multi-faceted, context dependent, and practical? Are there universal and discrete ways of teaching and learning that constitute best practice? Or are learning environments (classrooms) places where learners construct meaning through interaction with new situations which challenge currently held views, promote questioning, and emphasise understanding?

Is knowledge external, secular and objective, and reasoning and understanding coldly logical, convergent and yielding solutions? Or is knowledge moderated through a spiritual dimension and an inner harmony stemming from unity of mind, body and spirit?

C. Nature of Values, Social and Personal (Axiology): "Ways of Valuing"

Is self worth based on external recognition or on inner harmony? Is
social unity and community achievement valued or is there an emphasis on independent thought and action and on individual achievement? What social relationships are valued - those based on hierarchies or those which welcome outsiders, respect others, and value democratic decision making?

In terms of social outlook, is a radical approach favoured over a conservative one? Is there valuing of spontaneity, driven by passionate concerns or even impulsive actions, or is greater weight given to conservative values, and to unemotional, considered and cautious behaviour?

D. The Nature of Change and Progress: "Ways of Changing"

Is there an emphasis on the modern, the use of technology, overcoming nature and planning for the future in a global context? Or is there credence given to harmony in the universe, a balance with nature based on tradition and natural regeneration within a more insular ecosystem?

Does change occur through planned, technological interventions, often requiring an aggressive, competitive edge? Or is change more evolutionary and dependent on the past ways of doing things and valuing traditions?

Respondents were told that the survey was "about impressions and feelings" and "not about knowledge". They were asked to provide these impressions and feelings on 32 items each applied to seven countries. The countries were Australia and six Asian countries (The People's Republic of China, Japan, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, India, and Thailand). To do this, they were asked to assign a value on a 10 point scale to each of the 32 items for each country. The end-points (0 and 10) were defined by bipolar adjectives or phrases (e.g., rigid - flexible; competitive - non-competitive; focus on the past - focus on the future; knowledge through information - knowledge through unity of mind, body and spirit). For the instrument layout, the 32 items were not grouped according to the four domains defined above but rather into five clusters considered to be more meaningful in lay language, namely,

• social relationships (6 items);
• interaction with their world (6 items);
• society (6 items);
• social outlook (7 items); and
• education and learning (7 items).

Limitations of the instrument
In this initial version of the instrument, several problems were encountered with implications for a revision. Firstly, incomplete questionnaires and teachers' comments indicated the need to shorten the instrument. Secondly, the bipolar format for items raised questions on whether the descriptor pairs could be regarded as opposites, or if this aspect was itself culture dependent. Thirdly, some descriptors were not readily understood because of their cryptic nature. Fourthly, a significant number of teachers reacted negatively to the instrument, citing as reasons the length, their own lack of knowledge, or a desire to qualify their responses.

In the light of this feedback, the revised version of the instrument will

(a) use fewer items and countries;
(b) replace the adjective pairs with a direct statement;
(c) permit a "don't know" response; and
(d) abandon the bipolar format and 10 point scale in favour of a unipolar statement in Likert format.

The scaling problem is a particularly difficult one. A "tidy" research design would have used the same aspects of world view and compared these across countries. Some items did scale with adequate internal consistency across different countries. However, other clusters of items formed adequate scales when applied to one or more countries but not other countries. This finding should not surprise but it does have methodological implications for cross-cultural research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perceptions of Australian teachers on Asian countries

For the present conference, this paper reports on Australian teachers' perceptions of people in Australia and six Asian countries on two items selected from each of the four conceptual groupings for world view. Just how the four conceptual groupings should be mapped is a matter for debate. Based on their own conceptual analysis and aided by preliminary data from exploratory factor analyses, the researchers have identified two scale labels within each of the four groupings. These are set out in Table 2.

Table 2. Proposed Scales Within Four Conceptual Groupings of World View

From the 32 I-CUE items included in the questionnaire, teachers reported that a number were ambiguous and in others the bi-polar
adjectives were not seen as contrasts on the same dimension. Hence the scales are currently being revised to take account of these factors and others discussed above. For the present paper, results are reported in terms of eight items, one for each scale, which might be seen as "marker" or anchor items for the scales. Mean responses as well as standard deviations on these eight items are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. Responses of Teachers to Eight Marker Items*, One from Each Scale  (Total N = 214)
* Scores are on a 10 point scale; a higher score is associated with the description underlined

For each of the eight items, a repeated measures ANOVA reveals statistically different ratings across countries. Identification of the location of these differences requires additional analyses (orthogonal contrasts based on the repeated measures). Statistical significance is itself a function of sample size and, when differences are statistically significant, a further judgment is required on any educational significance of that difference. To facilitate reporting, a pragmatic 'rule', consistent with the statistical analysis and based on an educational judgment, has been applied across all items to facilitate interpretation. Given a median s.d. of 1.9, differences of approximately 1 scale unit have been regarded as "significant" in both senses. The pattern of responses to the eight items is shown graphically in Figure 1 (a) to (h). In this Figure, the median is shown with a heavy line and the box is drawn to include the middle 50 percent of cases (that is, from the 75th to the 25th percentile). Hence the length of the box is an indication of the spread of opinion (the interquartile distance) and the position of the median within the box is an indication of skewing in the distribution. The whiskers in the "box and whiskers plot" show the range of scores but with outliers (scores beyond 1.5 interquartile ranges from the median) omitted.

Fig. 1(a)  Box and whiskers plot for ratings on "materialistic (0) v. non-materialistic" (10) item.

Fig. 1 (b) Box and whiskers plot for ratings on "literal (0) v. symbolic" (10) item.

Fig. 1 (c)  Box and whiskers plot for ratings on "accepting (0) v. questioning (10)" item.

Fig. 1 (d) Box and whiskers plot for ratings on "knowledge through information (0) v. knowledge through unity of mind, body and spirit (10)" item.
Within this sample of teachers, for five of the eight items reported, Australia was perceived as being significantly different from all six Asian neighbours. In two more items, Australia was seen as different from all countries except Japan. Thus, compared with the six Asian countries, Australian society was perceived as more literal than symbolic; more questioning than accepting; more reliant on knowledge through information than through unity of mind, body and spirit; much more democratic than authoritarian in its social relationships; and less conservative in its social outlook.

Similarly, with the exception of Japan, Australia was perceived as being more materialistic in its interaction with its world and more global in its social outlook than its Asian neighbours. Only on the item on "passive v. aggressive" did Australian not have the highest or lowest mean. In this case, Japan, Korea and Indonesia received higher mean scores on aggression, although not significantly so using the criterion of one scale point difference.

Although results on only eight "marker" items have been reported here, the pattern across other items is very similar. Some discriminations are made among Asian countries, but the over-whelming feature is the difference between perceptions of WV for Australia and for Asian countries. The limitations of the present instrument have already been noted and our conclusions need to be moderated accordingly. Similarly, the divergence of views on any item and the frequently skewed nature of distributions are also evident in Figure 1. Nevertheless, in terms of WV perspectives, the inescapable conclusion is that Australian teachers do perceive Asian countries generally as very different from Australia.

But a second kind of evidence also emerges from the data. It is insightful to examine between country correlations on the items. Can countries be clustered in terms of teachers' relative perceptions? That is, even if country x is rated well above country y by the
teachers, do those teachers giving the relatively higher ratings to country x also give relatively higher ratings to country y?

Totals were formed for each item by summing responses across the seven countries as a group and correlations were then examined between ratings for each country and the summed ratings (or, more precisely, with the sum "corrected" by omission of the target country's rating). Almost invariably, the six Asian countries were substantially related to the corrected total but Australia yielded very low and frequently negative correlations. Results from just one item (E6), "accepting v. questioning", are provided in Table 4, but a similar pattern prevails for all items. In other words, even where differentiations are made among Asian countries, the overall pattern of response by teachers is similar for the Asian countries - they form a "family" - but very different for Australia. In terms of teachers' perceptions of these aspects of WV, Australia is simply not seen as part of Asia.

Table 4. Item v. Total Score Correlations for Item E6 Across the Seven Countries

Background factors and teachers' perceptions of Asian countries

Because ratings of the Asian countries were strongly associated, there is justification in forming scales by adding them. Ratings for Australia were in general not related to those for the Asian countries on any particular item. As a consequence, ratings were summed across the Asian countries (that is, excluding Australia) for the eight items reported in this paper. High internal consistency values (Cronbach alpha) were obtained for these scales as shown in Table 5. Total scale scores were then used in subsequent analyses to examine background factors related to ratings of Asian countries on the eight selected items.

Table 5. Reliability Coefficients (Cronbach Alpha) for Each of Eight Items Summed Across the Six Asian Countries

Three background variables (characteristics of teachers) were considered in the present analysis. These were gender, age (4 levels), and whether or not the teacher had spent any time in an Asian country (for whatever purpose). Three way ANOVAs (2 X 4 X 2) were used to explore the relationships. No significant (p < .05) main effects were evident and only two first order interactions reached significance (age x gender for SO2 and gender x time for S2). Given the isolated nature of these findings and that the magnitudes of the effects were small, it is fair to conclude that the study found no evidence of relationships between the three background characteristics and perceptions of WV applied to the set of Asian countries. The operational definition of time spent in an Asian country used in this analysis was very crude. A
more detailed analysis of meaningful in-country involvement is warranted although the proportion of teachers reporting other than tourist time in an Asian country is very low.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This preliminary study of Inter-Cultural Understanding in Education (I-CUE) has presented a conceptual framework encompassing the world views of different cultures and used this to investigate Australian teachers' perspectives on peoples, countries and cultures in six countries of the Asian region. As a result of the study, the instrument is being revised and modified in format. Nevertheless, data from the present study do pose a political and educational dilemma and raise important questions about prerequisites to the inclusion of studies of Asia across the curriculum in Australian schools.

The findings need to be considered in two aspects. Firstly, Australian teachers perceived on average notable differences between the world views of Australians and those of the peoples of India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, the People's Republic of China, and Thailand. In fact, although some discriminations were recognised among Asian countries, Australia was seen as significantly different from her Asian neighbours on the overwhelming majority of items investigated.

Fienberg (1993, p. 5) contended that we "once saw Asians as passive, imitative, obedient and dependent" but that today they are seen as "assertive, creative, self-reliant and independent". Our findings suggest this desirable changed perspective is not yet a pervasive one in schools let alone in the broader society. In fact, the perceived differences identified by teachers perpetuate a view of Asian countries as traditional, exotic, conservative, imposing authority and requiring compliance. It is a view which confuses strong cultural traditions with a non-modern approach, a lack of innovation and an inherent conservatism. Such a view also provides a rationale for differentiation, avoidance of meeting points and perpetuating the racialised Other. It encourages the treatment of Asian countries as less than equal in spite of quantitative indicators of rapid economic growth, trade expansion, and infrastructure development, and qualitative evidence of social development, political sophistication, educational development, and technological achievement. In terms of the model in Figure 3, these conclusions suggest there are a significant number of shared elements still perceived as different.

Secondly, a most striking finding of the study was that the pattern of responses given by Australian teachers showed that the Asian countries were perceived as a family or cluster and Australia was perceived as not belonging to that family. In spite of the vast differences in
languages, cultures, religions, histories and lifestyles among the six Asian countries, on any item, this study found relatively high correlations among the Asian countries but little or no correlation between Australia and the Asian countries. Whilst the political and educational initiatives relating to Asia highlight the cultural, political, social and economic diversity within the Asian region, teachers still tend to view countries within Asia as a part of a homogeneous, monolithic and fixed entity (cf. Trinh, 1991).

The present study revealed close associations in teachers' perceptions of different Asian countries. In contrast, Australia was perceived as being quite different from her Asian neighbours. Educators, politicians and others argue that the boundaries between Asia and Australia have been blurred; that the concept of fundamental differences between Asia and Australia needs to be questioned (e.g., Singh, 1995, p.9). But the empirical evidence suggests that teachers do not share these views. The consistent pattern on most items was of negligible or negative correlations between the ratings of Asian countries and those of Australia. According to teachers, the world views of Australians are different in kind from those of the peoples of Asian countries. For teachers, the oppositional divide between east and west continues as a conceptual reality.

These findings pose a significant dilemma for political and educational decision making. Whilst politicians and educators espouse cultural understanding as an essential outcome of schooling, and Studies of Asia as an integral part of Australian curricula, teachers see Australia as very different from Asian countries and still strongly affiliated with first world countries of Europe and North America. Genuine I-CUE is unlikely to be achieved whilst such perspectives persist. Nor are the political and educational agendas underlying the Asianisation of the curriculum or the broader social goals of developing critical, active, informed citizenry (Fienberg, 1993; Singh, 1995) likely to be met.

The findings also have significant implications for what teachers might do in the classroom. Tomlinson (1990) has argued that imperialist concerns have shaped the questions to be addressed in the curriculum and resulted in racist, Eurocentric and patriarchal curriculum. Singh (1995, p.28) argued for a need to systematically identify the assumptions that shape the selection of knowledge to be included in studies of Asia. Our research provides empirical support for this concern. Ultimately, it is the classroom teacher who is responsible for the selection of the knowledge, values, and understandings about Asia which are communicated to students. Yet, there is limited opportunity for a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the peoples, cultures and societies of Asia, if the perspectives of teachers are constrained by limited preconceptions and understandings of world views within Asia and Australia.
If, as the evidence suggests, teachers do have a limited understanding of Australia as part of a diverse Asian region, this reduces their ability to communicate an honest, contemporary view of Asia and to mitigate the distance between students and the object of their studies. As a consequence, there is a danger that the conceptual divide between Asia and Australia will be perpetuated.

Singh (1995, p. 22-23) argued for a "multi-vocal representation of Asia" which brings "into the curriculum those Asian voices which have been dismissed in the past" and which introduces "previously unnoticed affinities between Asian perspectives ... and their Australian counterparts". What space will Australian teachers find to allow "marginalised Asian voices to present their cases and enter into dialogues with the rising generations of Australians" (Singh, 1995, p.20) if teachers remain trapped by images of traditional oppositions such as east/west or values reminiscent of the coloniser/colonised?

What are the implications of these conclusions? We believe these findings and the conclusions drawn highlight the urgency of implementing strategies to foster teachers' inter-cultural understanding. The concept that social and economic change can be achieved through the classroom is fatally flawed if teachers are ignorant of Asia or their perspectives are limited by stereotypical views and values. Fitzgerald (1991) rightly argued that Asia literate teachers were a prerequisite for Asia-literate students: "The point is to provide excellent Australian teachers, who are Asia-literate and who are committed to helping our children to understand the world in which they will live and work" (p.25). Our study provides empirical support for this position. Current educational and political agendas are destined to failure unless substantial resources are directed to training programs to facilitate inter-cultural understanding of teachers. Teacher education and the development of teachers' I-CUE ought be a first order priority in redefining the cultural borders and relocating Australia in Asia.

Yet a significant question remains unanswered. Are the views of teachers typical of those of other Australians? This is the subject of a further study and no empirical data are currently available. But it is reasonable to surmise that the teachers who participated in the study represent a more Asia-aware and Asia-literate sample than other cross-sections of Australian society. Teachers have comparatively higher levels of education than most other sections of the community and those in this sample had an personal commitment to increasing their knowledge and understanding of Asia: they participated in the study immediately prior to undertaking a voluntary, professional development program in teaching Studies of Asia.

In terms of the model of I-CUE presented in this paper (Figure 3), the data provided have considered only one side of the I-CUE coin. The
research will continue in 1996 using Japanese and Thai teachers and a variety of methodologies for data collection. In this way, we believe the extended study of I-CUE will not only contribute to theory development, but will provide stimulus material to facilitate the reciprocal development of inter-cultural understanding in teachers in Australia and in Asian countries which will enable them "to see themselves as part of new border zones, to engage in new types of boundary crossings and to participate in new global relations" (Singh, 1995).

References


