

Final Report

The impact of educational migration on the professional lives of Colombo Plan scholarship holders.

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Executive Summary

This project is producing new knowledge that will add to our understandings of the long term impacts of educational migration on the cultural, economic and professional lives of education migrants and their ongoing engagement as ‘global’ citizens. Phase one of this project has now been completed. In 2009 the researcher interviewed 11 former Colombo Plan Scholars in Malaysia and undertook archive searches in Singapore, Wellington, and Dunedin. Phase two is now underway. In 2010 the researcher has undertaken follow-up archive searches in Singapore, Wellington and Christchurch (taking advantage of other travel opportunities and not using URC funding). Follow-up interviews with New Zealand host families; foreign affairs contacts etc are planned.

This project is still ongoing. In 2010 the Researcher took up a new programme leadership role and as a consequence of this and the restructuring within the Department of Education there have been some delays in regard to publications emerging of phase one. However, progress in this regard is back on track with an abstract accepted for an international conference (Australia and New Zealand History of Education Society), an invitation to write a chapter for an edited book on Australasian Universities and a paper underway for submission to an international refereed journal.

Background

There are important gaps in our understanding of the long term impacts of educational migration on the professional and work lives of migrants – this at a time when the ‘education project’ has required the relocation of one or more members of the family to a different country for increasing numbers of Asian families. While the Colombo Plan provided the beginnings of extensive contact between New Zealand and countries in South Eastern Asia, there has until now been no comprehensive analysis of the long term implications of educational migration for the professional lives of former scholarship holders and for ongoing engagements between South East Asia and New Zealand. As many of the former scholarship holders are now in positions of prominence in the educational, political and business world in South East Asia, and the researcher was offered a unique opportunity to gain access to them, undertaking this research has been particularly timely.

Aims and Objectives

The aims of this research project are to:

1. explain the key effects of educational migration to NZ on the professional lives of S.E. Asian Colombo Plan Scholarship holders.
2. describe ways in which the experience of study in New Zealand shaped engagements between South East Asians and New Zealanders
3. identify the long term impact of educational migration on ongoing relationships in the area of policy between New Zealand & S. E. Asia.

This research employed an approach called “analysis of narratives”. In this approach a data base consisting of archival, questionnaire and oral texts has been examined to discover themes that

appear across the sources. This study has used a wide range of “historical” methods of data collection including a process of data collection from archival, documentary and oral sources followed by a situated “reading” of the written, oral and visual texts and narratives. Interviews and data analysis is ongoing.

Outcomes/findings (from Phase One)

Against the backdrop of the cold war and fears of the spread of communism in Southeast Asia, Commonwealth countries initiated the Colombo Plan as a way of providing economic and technical assistance and sponsoring the education of Asian students in countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada. From 1951 onwards, the arrival of Colombo Plan scholars from Ceylon, India and later South East Asia was one of the most striking manifestations of shifts in New Zealand’s conception of its place in a post-colonial world. A key aspect of this change was the provision of scholarships for the education and training of Asian students who would return home to contribute to the development their home countries in the South East Asian region.

This research has examined the impact of the arrival of Colombo plan students in New Zealand universities, detailing ways in which their experience reflected ruptures between ‘east and west’ as well as connections across spaces, temporalities and geographies. Phase one of the research has considered ways in which public and policy discourses about the Colombo Plan programme shaped initial engagements between New Zealand and the scholarship holders. Oral and archival sources provided evidence of individual encounters between former Colombo Plan scholars and New Zealanders.

Conclusions

Preliminary conclusions suggest that while the public aims of the Colombo Plan focused on the containment of communism and the development of post-colonial connections in the South East Asian region in post-war years, individual encounters between Colombo Plan scholars and New Zealanders played a role in changing social attitudes in what had been a deeply mono-cultural society.

Implications

Any discussion of implications can only be provisional at this stage. However, this research highlights the need for greater historical depth and complexity in studies about the impact of educational migration, for ongoing empirical work to capture the multi-dimensionality of contexts, places and networks, and for the value of biography for illuminating social, political and historical contexts. Early findings point to the importance of understanding the cultural, historic and political factors that shape policies of educational migration and the significant implications cross cultural engagements have for the lives of international students who travel across borders in search of higher education and for the host countries they visit.

Publications and dissemination

Abstract accepted from this research at ANZHES (Australia and New Zealand History of Education Society) International Conference at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, December 2010.

‘Perspectives from the periphery? Colombo Plan scholars in New Zealand Universities’

An invitation to submit a chapter to an edited book on the history of Australasian Universities (to be edited by Prof Geoffrey Sherington, University of Sydney)

Future outputs anticipated from this project

At least one paper to be submitted to quality assured journal.

Ongoing papers to be submitted to quality assured journals such as History of Education, History of Education Review as data analysis continues

Recent outputs from previously funded URC research on Home Science Graduates (2007-8)

Accepted (manuscript now under review)

Fitzgerald, T & Collins, J. Struggles, strategies and compromises: The first generation of academic women at the University of New Zealand 1909-1949, New York: Cambria Press.

Accepted and forthcoming in 2010

Collins, J. (2010). In search of scholarly expertise: Women graduates at the University of New Zealand, 1911-1961. *History of Education Review*, 39 (2) (forthcoming)

Published

Collins, J. (2009). Creating women's work in the academy and beyond: Carnegie connections, 1923-1942. *History of Education* 791-808.

Collins, J. (2009). Beyond the domestic sphere? A home science education at the University of New Zealand, 1911-1936. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 41:2,115 - 130

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