Travel and curriculum for a global world

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‘Travelling does not interest me ... How should I imagine China if I were to visit it?
It’s not visiting I care about. It’s not China but the imagining that interests me.’
Alex Miller, *The Ancestor Game* 1992

**Introduction**
Opportunities to travel and the number of people travelling have never been greater. This increase in travel is shown, through a quick glance into my own family across four generations from 1890s to today. My paternal grandmother was born in Ipswich, Queensland in the 1890s and lived there until she met my grandfather. She then moved to Brisbane, a mere 80 kilometres away where she lived all her life. She ventured on a plane once, to visit our family in Sydney. My parents born in the 1920s, first travelled overseas, when they were in their mid 30s and since enjoyed more than 10 overseas trips. I was born in the late 1950s, have been overseas more than 30 times, the first time when I was 19. My nieces and nephews born in the late 1980s had their first overseas trip when they were 15.

**Travel on the move**
According to the World Tourism Organisation, in 1950 there were 25 million arrivals worldwide, in 2005 there were 806 million arrivals, showing a 6.5% growth rate over this period. Tourism is one of the world’s biggest industries and it is on the move.

Travel by definition is the movement of people from one place to another. Whilst this can be mundane it also holds possibilities for transformation and renewal. Travel embraces a myriad of meanings – it is all of entertainment, exploration, repose and escape, equated with self-transformation and worldliness. Travel offers the chance to create new knowledge, about the world and one’s place in the world. In travel, there are possibilities for refinement and readjustment of knowledge of place, attitudes, values and images of the world. Travel connects the local to global and global to local.

Travel can interrupt and disrupt ways of seeing and understanding the world. Because travel can be such a disrupting experience in its uniqueness, it offers a particular quality to memory and hence opportunity for learning. It is a significant lived experience that shapes our subjectivities.
The flow of teachers

A certain percentage of the 806 million arrivals worldwide in 2005 included teachers. The estimate number is difficult to calculate, however even if there were only 1% that makes 8,060,000 teachers who had some form of travel experience during the course of 2005. So these arrivals represent a flow and movement of information, ideas and images across borders and between people.

For teachers, their own travel can embed a rich resource of lived experience to be accessed, explored, utilised, reflected on and applied into the classroom. As travel provides such a creative force for understanding socio cultural worlds, it offers multiple opportunities for teachers in the classroom. Such travel experiences moves ideas around the globe and offers opportunities to connect to the classroom. However few teachers welcome or access their own lived experience or truly bring themselves into the classroom. Merryfield, (2000) in her study of teacher educators included the importance of the lived experience in the classroom and the particular impetus that travel can give, she noted:

...teachers own history and lived experience influence their teaching space which then shapes practice in the classroom. ‘Travel can lead to new perspectives about human difference or trouble stereotypes and generalisations about groups of people. (p.434)

So teachers experiences becomes influential in the delivery of curriculum, now shaped by information and communications technology, mobility and the forces of globalisation.

A globalised world

Today, societies in the developed world are living, working and being in a globalised world. All of the world’s cultures, people histories, religions, economies are available as either historical records or living entities. Within seconds connections are made across oceans and lands, viewing real time events are commonplace, Nike, Coca Cola and Sanyo can be seen on every continent in the world and environmental problems are no longer local in nature – global warming the most pressing issue currently facing our world.

This ‘global’ world prompts a reorientation of curriculum in schools and Universities aligned to understanding a global world. The shape of curriculum is being influenced by a world, increasingly connected and global in its outlook and influences. New approaches are
required to enable curriculum to respond to challenges that this new world presents of
uncertainty, information overload connectivity technological advances to name a few.

Curriculum reform such as the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) noted the
importance of this global world and the role and place of education.

The preamble to the VELS (2005) stated:
The Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) propose that students need to develop a
set of knowledge, skills and behaviours which will prepare them for success in a world which
is complex, rapidly changing, rich in information and communications technology,
demanding high order knowledge and understanding and increasingly global in its outlook
and influences.
To succeed in that world, all students need to develop capacities to:
• manage themselves in the world
• understand the world in which they live
• act effectively in that world.
Students will need to create a future which:
• Is sustainable – developing an understanding of the interaction between social,
  economic and environmental systems and how to manage them
• Is innovative – developing these skills to solve new problems using a range of
different approaches to create unique solutions

Teachers in a global world
Central in this education response to teaching a global education is the role and place of
teachers. How do teachers develop a global curriculum or global perspective in their
teaching? Teachers can make connections to a global world through an exploration of their
own 'lived experiences' especially as they include travel. There have been increasing calls
for teachers to locate their own subjectivities in a more aggressive way into the classroom.
Greene, (1999) calls for this, when she comments:
Teachers need to bring themselves to school to use their own lives, knowledge and
explorations as elements within the curriculum.

So there is a call for teachers to bring themselves more into the classroom, their
subjectivities and their lived experiences often of travel.
Travel and teachers
There has been little research on the impact of lived experience such as travel on teachers and their teaching. A study titled *Encountering Cultures* by Christine Halse was commissioned specifically by the AEF (Asia Education Foundation) to gauge impact and note any recommendations to improve the quality of study tour program. The focus of the report is the impact the study tour had on teachers’ identity post study tour.

The complexity of gauging impact from such an experience is noted by Halse, (1999) in the report when she stated:

> genuine cross cultural learning and its effective application in schools is not a linear, uni-directional process that can be simplistically reduced to an uncomplicated binary of experience /application. (, p.14)

From my experience leading teacher study tours, the resultant impact is so disparate, individual and personal that it is difficult to generalise.

So the space between experience and application becomes a focus for understanding how experiences can be applied. One experience can lead to multiple applications, ideas, thoughts and actions, across a group of people. Into the space between experience and application is the aesthetic realm of imagination. The role and force of imagination becomes important in understanding how the experience of travel can shape application into the classroom. So what then is the quality that allows experience to become application or impact?

The following section of this paper will look at the role of imagination as a quality and force and using a lens of imagination, will analyse two teacher’s experiences of travel and the resultant impact.

Imagination
In her book *Releasing the Imagination*, (Greene, 1995) proposed imagination as a force, a quality, a catalyst for change and renewal for individuals. Greene framed imagination through an individual aesthetic realm, that empowered the individual and drew from the work of Dewey, to argue the transformative influence of imagination, ‘consciousness always has an imaginative phase, and in imagination, more than any other capacity, breaks
through the ‘inertia of habit’. (p.19) No other quality gives rise to empathy and alternative realities as imagination for individuals. Greene asserts that it is through imagination that there is a progression from what is known to that which is unknown, or a ‘leaving behind and reaching toward’ (p.20)

Greene claimed imagination as a private quality having the power to break habit and bring the viewer to new worlds and ways of seeing, to break through the ‘inertia of habit’. Imagination offered the potential for the individual to see new things and view new worlds and through reflection, imagination is enacted. So then travel offers a rich space for imagination.

Greene focused her description of imagination in personal transformation, changing new horizons, an absence of inertia, a break away, development of empathy, to see ‘alternative realities’ progressing students to new places. Rhetoric of progression, transformation rather than regression in its purpose explains imagination.

Greene makes the point that imagination allows us to experience empathy with different points of view… ‘imagination may be the new way of decentring ourselves of breaking out of the confinements of privatism and self regard into a space where we can come face to face with others and call out, "here we are." (p.31)

As advocated by Greene, imagination is a quality embedded in individual private spaces that engages randomly, is released to create ‘new’ or progress further, break habit, see differently, view more than one. Travel can prompt and irritate imagination to break out and create new ways of seeing, doing and being.

John Ralston Saul (Saul, 2001) is a philosopher and in his book On Equilibrium devotes an entire chapter to imagination. He argues the pervasiveness of imagination in daily life and the interconnectedness between imagination and everything else, ‘imagination is a quality that draws together other qualities.’ p.115

So if imagination is the quality that ‘creates new’, ‘breaks habit’ and ‘sees alternative realities’ then imagination is the quality, which can transforms experience to impact as
offers an explanation to this work of transformation and can be applied in understanding the impact of travel.

Greene’s analysis of imagination offers a quality that can help frame analysis of teachers experiences of travel in terms of empathy the ‘other’ and’ multiple ways of seeing and doing’, and the breaking of habit.

**Social imaginaries**
Progressing the work of Saul and Greene on the place and role of imagination in modern society, Appadurai, 2002 notes that imagination has ‘broken out of the special expressive space of art, myth and ritual and has now become part of the quotidian mental work of ordinary people in many societies.’ (p.5)

The advances in technology, increased mobility, and connectivity all make for a connected world and one where imagination also no longer resides individually but becomes mobile. (Appadurai, 2001) argued that: ‘globalisation is not just a new phase of interconnectedness, mobility but it is ‘marked by a new role for the imagination in public life’ (p.13)

Under the growing influence of globalisation and the effects of this on our lives, imagination is beyond the individual aesthetic and is now located across and between individuals in public spaces.

Imagination is now within and apart from the individual. It is within the person through the tradition of aesthetic realm and there exists a new role for imagination in public life beyond the individual.

So what does this mean for teachers travel and lived experience? In the experiences and stories of two teachers’ imagination opens up possibilities for an education that becomes a global education. Imagination becomes that quality between experience and application.

Two teachers were interviewed to ascertain how their experiences of travel through a study tour impacted on their work and in particular the development of a global education. Clare was a Curriculum Leader in a secondary school and Wendy was a primary classroom teacher. Both these teachers were selected as they had recently participated in a study tour.
Clare had been to Korea and India and Wendy had been to Japan, both had travelled extensively prior to the study tour experience.

Emerging Themes
‘creating new’
Clare comments about one of the impacts on travel in response to the question – could you describe some of the impacts of travel.

…as Head of English I was immediately aware of outdated text list.
so probably the impact that trip had directly was a quite re-orientation impact changed practice of the text list at the school towards a much more studies of Asia focus in terms of English.

In crossing the boundary into Korea, Clare could not have imagined where such an experience would lead. One immediate impact, was a very noticeable change from an ‘outdated’ to a ‘new’ English text list. This decision was a very clear and tangible change that occurred upon return of this study tour. The language used in Clare’s response is direct and strong, ‘immediately aware’ and ‘quite a re-orientation’. Upon return to the school, Clare saw the text list through new eyes, and it became ‘outdated’. Within Clare’s consciousness, the ‘given’ the ‘old’ text list was questioned, it was seen from another vantage point. The old vantage point was obviously now deficit, ie not enough of studies of Asia, something not apparent before the travel.

‘Outdated’ suggests no longer useful, if something is outdated it no longer serves its purpose, it no longer meets what it is designed to do. Within Clare’s conscious mind there was imagined a new way which applied to the text list rendered this as ‘outdated’. In inclusion of more studies of Asia texts the text list is restored to usefulness and function and becomes ‘updated’.

So this particular decision, this realization prompted by the experiences of travel and being a global world shaped the type of curriculum offered at that school and progressed it towards a more ‘global’ education.

Mary Warnock quoted in (Greene, 1995) emphasised the importance of the lived experience of the world ‘that it can possibly meet the unreflecting eye, that our experience
is significant for us, and worth the attempt to understand it” she also goes onto say that, ‘there is always more to experience and more in what we experience than we can predict’ This may have been true in Clare’s case. The actual study tour was not predetermined to change text lists, however this consciousness was raised whilst being immersed in the ‘other’ traveling in Korea. So the travel led to something not predicted. As a result of the study tour, the viewing of the text list, the imagining of better a more modern progressive text list and one that embraced a more ‘global’ orientation.

‘connections’

India was much more home stay and teaching in India school was brilliant and making connection to that principal and she came out to here and was brilliant in this school doing some teaching and just having a general level of exposure to students and we all wore saris that week... that sort of visual impact as well on both occasions how many students came up to me because I always do assemblies based on the trips and said to me I have been to India or I am Korean and made those really personal connections.

...obviously impact of the happiness of joy of individual students coming up and sharing their experience of that country or saying that they are Korean I got one girl up to talk about her experiences in Australia on the back of what I have done and parents will come up to me just made a real cultural connection between kids of that background on a personal level and

...and one thing I do is to have slide shows during lunch time of travels, and it is really interesting what staff pick up on and what they say and you have influence beyond what you could imagine, by doing those sorts of things and after assemblies I will have students and staff come and talk to me about things that I did not intend to raise it is out there, it is able to become matter of discussion because of the perspective it is given and the priority it is given

Through the visual artefact of dress, connections between teacher and students is enriched and enhanced. In this visual space there developed a recognition of the ‘other’ that is not stereotyped nor exotic but allowed a pathway where student’s private world walked alongside that of the teacher’s public world. The promotion of dress of another culture in a neither stereotypical nor exotic, ‘one off’, way confers an acceptance of that country, that lay beyond surface awareness, and opens receptivity between teacher and student. Students felt accepted to approach teachers to share their own subjectivities of being Indian or
Korean. Being able to create these spaces of acceptance and spaces of engagement that feels safe, is surely one of the purposes of schooling and education.

A breaking out from a private space to new spaces, gave students a sense of agency and empowerment that opened up the flow of connectivity between teacher and student. Clare comments on this when she says, ‘really personal connections.’

So ‘dressing up’ as a visual artefact—a symbol of culture, offers deep connections where empathy is allowed to flow and there is safety. Through the embodiment of culture, students feel safe to be taken out of their private spaces to new territories that open and release their person. This is the quality of imagination at work a breaking out, creating new connections, forging new relationships and confidences. This resonates so strongly with Greene,(1995) where she comments on the role of imagination, ‘breaking out of the confinements of privatism and self-regard.’

**Breaking the inertia of habit**

*There is one thing that has really changed me going to Japan on the study tour was that when we as teachers visited schools we were treated liked royalty we came in every school children were at a ceremony, invited into hall sang songs, gave us speciality sweets wonderful cups of tea, half the teachers didn’t like.*

*For me, when I went back to Meadow Green and here we had a couple of Korean teachers visit us ...I felt so ashamed how we treated teaching assistants in my experience but I felt embarrassed and ashamed, that they could sit in the staff room and no one would talk to them on their first day, and it has made me feel more conscious as it has made me treat them as honoured guests because that was how I was treated although it may not be the Australian way I think it is really important to make the extra effort to make people feel like we are really happy that they are there and they are special...*

*so that has been a very interesting experience for me., to have that sense of them and to realise the embarrassment of what I used to be like be like real change in how I am. I saw it when two Korean teachers were here a couple of weeks ago, and I could feel it in myself, when they were sitting at the staffroom table, and no body had done anything for them and no one had organised and they were to send around a tour on their own. I said no. no. no that can’t happen they need to be given a real tour and lots of information and yes it did happen. So yes that was a crucial thing that I learnt and I would have never learnt that from being a holiday maker.*
Great benefit to me because I got so friendly with one of them at Meadow Green that we travelled Japanese teacher Tasmania together and had a fantastic holiday I had a Korean teacher stay with me

So it really helped me to work out how I should be in that context, someone else will look after them I’m sure, which they don’t in Australia

Wendy Interview

Wendy’s story here is told with feeling. In Japan, Wendy experienced a form of welcome and greeting characterized by extravagance and entertainment which led to a feeling of being treated ‘like royalty’ - the highest respect that could be shown upon a person. This experience opened up new ways of greeting and welcome, different to known ones and transformed knowledge.

Empowered with a new sense of agency upon return and experiencing the ‘old’ ritual and practice of greeting and welcoming visitors in the school, Wendy felt empowered to act and to challenge the authority of the Principal in quite a direct way. She attributes this challenge and the resultant changes to her travel experience.

The story shows the breaking away, creating a new space, a new ritual and practice in the school, it breaks the ‘inertia of habit’. The practice and custom of welcome was no longer silent, but made vocal for its inadequacy and inaptness as a greeting.

Within the conscious space of Wendy’s imagination was a desire for better ways of doing that recognized the frailties of the old ways embedded in school tradition. The lack of welcome and perceived unease in her home school with what to do with visitors was contrasted in her consciousness with the greeting and effusive welcome and generosity of time, gifts shown whilst in Japan. Wendy then challenges authority over the ways in which the visitors would be shown the school, showing empathy for the visitors. To challenge this embedded practice is at the heart of the releasing of imagination from the consciousness to the everyday life.

So from experiencing the staffroom in Japan through the consciousness into the realms of possibilities a new way of greeting and custom was imagined for the school. This
trajectory involved a challenge to authority and through the imagination of one person new forms of greeting and welcome emerged and broke the ‘inertia of habit.’

In conclusion, Wendy comments on the impact of the study tour:
‘So it really helped me to work out how I should be in that context’.

This comment highlights the adjustment within Wendy’s subjectivity to a merging of herself to the environment that she works in. Travel gave her agency and empowerment. Surely no stronger could be used here, that the study tour had helped her to work out how to ‘be’. Imagination adjusts ourselves if we allow it to be within us.

This story shows the role that imagination now occupies is within the public social realm as a social imaginary. If we apply the work of Appadurai, (2001) to this story, imagination has broken out of the aesthetic realm and is now take on newer meaning and purpose due to the complexities and influences of globalisation. Wendy had seen more than one way of being in the world, and this flowed through to the school community. As Appadurai noted: imagination is no longer a matter of individual genius escapism from ordinary life, or just a dimension of aesthetics. It is a faculty that informs the daily lives of ordinary people in myriad ways. It allows people to … design new forms of civic association and collaboration across national boundaries. So we have through the spilt personality of imagination the design for new civic life (p. 5)

Travel impacts on individuals in a myriad of ways often difficult to quantify. Two teachers travelled as part of a study tour to countries in Asia. As a result of their experiences they both enacted change practices within their school community that lead to greater ‘global’ education in the curriculum; opened opportunities for greater connectivity between staff and students. Parallel to the changes in the school, were the changes within their own person - greater sensitivity to the ‘other’, increased empathy and forging of friendships that span countries. If we are to develop greater connections to a globalised world, then teacher’s lived experiences of travel requires a higher profile to allow a ‘global’ education to flow and be mobilised into the classroom, school and community.

References


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