



 Going places

STUDENT EXCHANGE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC: ETHICAL PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

The Ethical Practice Principles for Student Exchange have been developed through accessing the expertise, experience and knowledge of Australian higher education academics and mobility staff, international academics and non-government organisation staff across the Indo-Pacific region and Australian students with recent exchange experiences. Data was collected over 2016–2017 via a survey with Australian schools of social work and qualitative interviews with twelve social work academic staff in Australia, ten host staff from the Indo-Pacific and thirteen students across seven universities in Australia. The research findings were tested and progressively refined through multi disciplinary workshops, which included staff from mobility, work-integrated learning and learning and teaching functions as well as academics from diverse disciplines including social work, journalism, education, health, business, law, arts and geography. Three workshops were held in Australia, two in India, one in Thailand and one online workshop captured the experiences of participants from Samoa and the Philippines.

KEY TERMS

Culture: a system of values, and customs that are learned and shared.

Imperialism: a system where one culture, people and way of life permeates, transforms and comes to define another.

Colonialism: the invasion of territory inhabited by people of a different culture to establish political, social, spiritual, intellectual, and economic domination.

Ethnocentrism: an evaluation of other people and cultures based on the standards and customs of one's own culture.

Authentic: refers to relationships that are significant, purposive, trustworthy, and genuine

Sustainability: the ability to be maintained at a consistent level over time.

Sustainable Internationalisation: is based on respectful human and environmental interactions and the establishment of mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships.



*Photographs on the cover,
and many throughout this document,
by Narayan Gopal Krishnan*

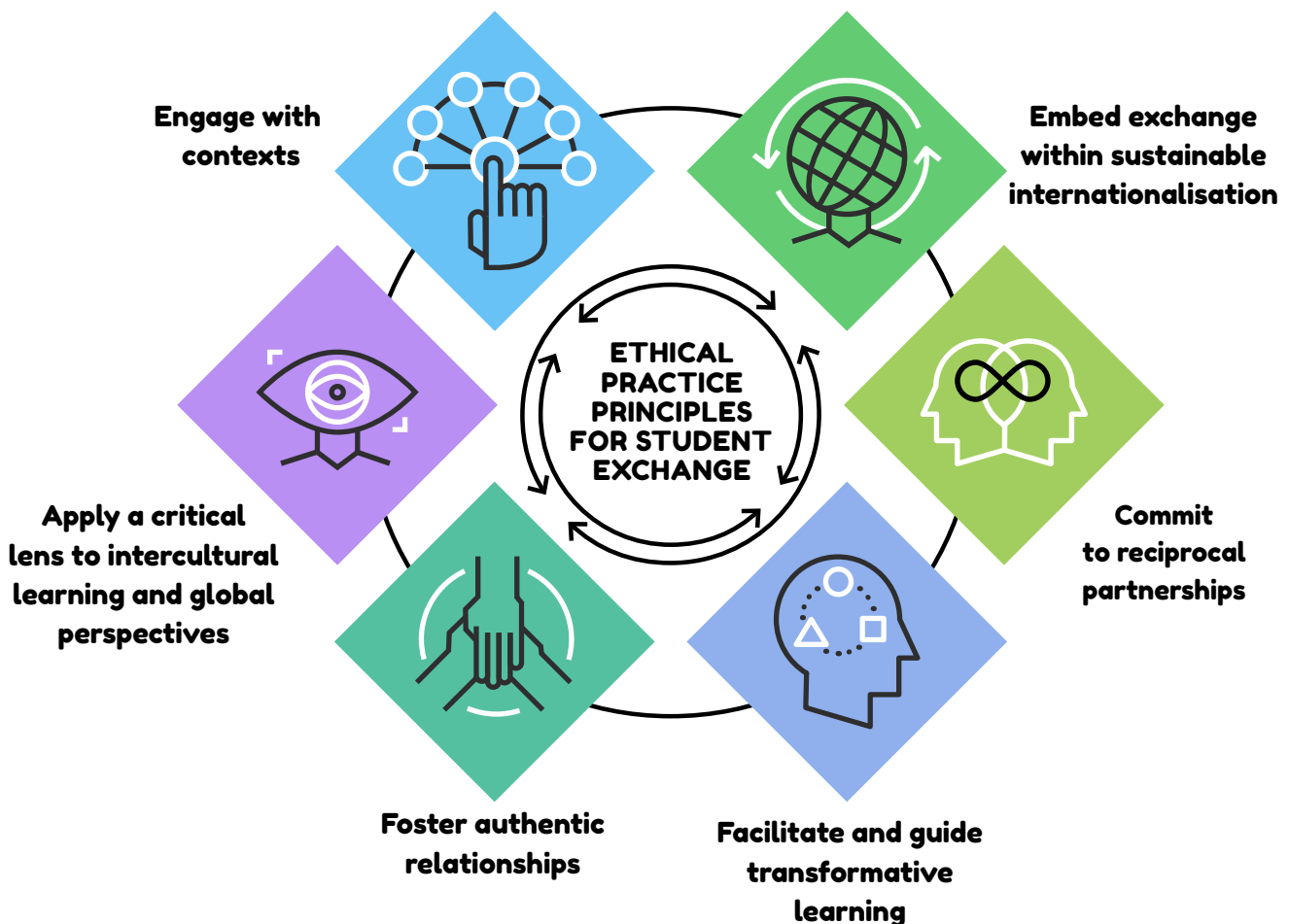


The Ethical Practice Principles for Student Exchange in the Indo-Pacific (or The Principles) are designed to support higher education academics and mobility staff in promoting social justice, equity, transformative learning and reciprocity. The Principles apply a critical lens to the post colonial context that shapes exchange relationships in the Indo-Pacific region and are informed by the research undertaken through the Going Places project (see www.goingplaces.edu.au).

THE PRINCIPLES

The Principles guide ethical practice in student exchange by positioning student learning within sustainable, authentic and reciprocal international partnerships that are informed by the historical, structural, socio-political, cultural, ecological and professional contexts in which exchange takes place. The Ethical Practice Principles can be applied to develop and enrich partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region who support exchange experiences and inform student learning support structures.

Figure 1: Ethical Practice Principles for Student Exchange





WHAT IS STUDENT EXCHANGE?

The Principles apply to a range of international student exchange experiences with particular focus on programs driven by disciplinary intercultural learning and global citizenship goals.

In this context, student exchange encompasses the multiple forms of international experiences in which students participate as part of their higher education studies. This may include virtual exchange, study tours with homestays and cultural awareness programs, work integrated learning experiences, short-term field visits, internships, longer term placements, or semester-long experiences. Exchange may be arranged through long-standing personal connections between academics, through formalised collaborations between mobility and academic staff, or through third party providers. The experiences will differ, and the length and type of experience may affect the depth of learning outcomes for students, yet The Ethical Practice Principles for Student Exchange are relevant to all types of experiences.

The use of the term 'exchange' in The Principles is deliberate, as a counter to neo liberal terms such as 'mobility programs' that emphasise a one-way flow of students, designed to develop a mobile and highly competitive Australian graduate in the international marketplace. In globalised work, equitable and collaborative international relationships are key. Exchange values the mutuality of intercultural learning, and includes a two-way flow of knowledge, ideas and resources for staff and students. Ethical international exchange develops graduates' professional practice based on a knowledge and understanding of privilege, racism, power, diverse worldviews and global issues. This builds the future graduates' capacity to work in diverse contexts with a critical awareness of the potential for imperialism in intercultural experiences.

I think that it's important in the context of where we are today in the global world that [students] have some experience to international work, to international issues that are happening and how are people responding to issues globally on justice or equity, on rights, on marginalisation, gender violence, terrorism... and I think it really creates a community ... you realise you're not alone in this whole world fighting for issues on equity and justice. I think that is what will happen to students when they go on international exchange programs (Workshop participant, Kerala, India).





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THE HOST PERSPECTIVE ON STUDENT EXCHANGE

The host organisation is crucial to an exchange experience, yet the host voice is notably absent in much of the literature or guides to student exchange. The Principles intend to redress this balance, through consultation with host organisations across the Indo-Pacific. While the interactions that sending agencies have with their hosts may be limited to exchange processes or collaborative research, hosts highlighted their extensive accountabilities to funding bodies, sponsors, communities and clients. Agreeing to host students on exchange is more than providing time and space to accommodate international visitors. In many cases hosts are trusting their international partners and visiting students to conduct themselves in ways supportive of the host's reputation within their community. Hosts see themselves as organisations with much to offer and teach exchange students and international partners, and The Principles intend to highlight the importance of collaboration with hosts to shape international exchange experiences. Research participants, including hosts, sending agencies and students are quoted throughout this document to illustrate the perspectives of all groups involved in an international exchange.

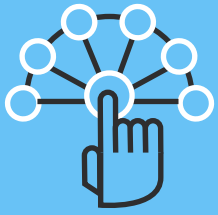
HOW USING THE PRINCIPLES CAN ENHANCE YOUR EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE AND DELIVERY

The Ethical Practice Principles have applications to benefit start-up and well-established programs as:

- A guide to provide an approach to ethical practice in exchange for programs starting out;
- A guide with a view to extending ethical practice for evaluating well-established programs;
- A guide to documenting the true workload involved in sustaining exchange programs and in securing resources.

The series of Principles in Action are companion guides to provide more detail on ethical practices in exchange.

([Website link here to PIA guides](#)).



Engage with context

The international partnerships that support student exchange are based on a recognition and understanding of each partner's historical, structural, socio political and cultural connections. Australia's relationship with the Indo-Pacific region is situated within a historical context of colonisation, income disparities and shifting power balances. A decolonising approach to student exchange commits to ethical practice, social justice, equity, equality and values alternate worldviews.



An approach that engages with context:

- Supports exchange through formal agreements at university level.
- Recognises and addresses the potential for ethnocentrism in international relationships.
- Acknowledges and addresses the issues of power, privilege, racism and imperialism.
- Challenges ethnocentric beliefs and values local knowledge and expertise.
- Fosters respect for host country contexts.
- Positions exchange within a long-term partnership, contributing to personal growth and professional practice for staff and students.
- Links staff and student learning from exchange programs to professional contexts by building connections across boundaries, recognising alternative professional practice.
- Checks expectations with hosts and provides the opportunity to ask hosts about their expectations.

What do host staff say about engaging with context?

This is not just allowing a space for somebody to come in and kind of have their third world experience. We want them to be able to gain something from this experience and also to leave behind something.

Sending institutions also need to look at the critical issues that the society is facing and to include them in the preparations. Conceptual clarity as well as practice issues are to be covered in preparation. For example a discussion on minority status is important if they are visiting slums.

What do sending staff say about engaging with context?

It actually helps them locate the theories, but then attach some practice to that, and actually put it into practice...the dilemmas of working in a context with a low level of resources, the dilemmas of learning in communication, ethical behaviour... perhaps the ethical dilemmas of research...There's a lot of learning in that.

Studying the history of the country alone can reinforce colonialism, rather than getting a critical perspective on the history and get students to think about how they can contribute through a different way of practicing, so the preparation is crucial.

What do students say about engaging with context?

When refugees come to Australia or immigrants come into Australia, you go, we're a really open, inviting, easy country to come into, but until you actually experience how many barriers and boundaries there are by being the minority, it's really hard to empathise with these people coming in. And, I think, that was the first time I've really gone, oh, this is what it must feel like for those people that are the minority, we're not that easy.

The way that the ... society works and the way that NGOs work – I mean, it's a big place, I can't generalise at all - but it was a lot more ground up. It became a lot more from a community and from where people currently are, not where different people think that they should be. Having seen that it's really impacted on my idea of what is a first world and why do we label things like First World and why do we label places like India Third World what does all of that mean and what is progressive, who is more progressed and less progressed and different things like that, seeing life from a different angle.



Embed exchange within sustainable internationalisation

Student exchange is one aspect of internationalisation and, when embedded in the context of a broader international collaboration, offers the opportunity for staff and students to engage in intercultural learning, nurture connections and develop global mindedness. Sustainable internationalisation is an ongoing human endeavour to develop and transform learning and professional practice across boundaries, by promoting connections, developing understanding, addressing power imbalances and valuing diversity.



An approach that embeds exchange within sustainable internationalisation:

- Invests in institutional support for exchange, so that programs are embedded within curriculum and resourced.
- Positions student exchange within the context of a broader, multi-faceted international partnership.
- Formalises relationships through mutually agreed instruments such as partnership agreements or memorandums.
- Plans for succession and creates connections beyond individual relationships.
- Acknowledges host contributions in reports and publications.
- Incorporates collaborative exchange arrangements with partners who share joint exchange goals.
- Designs arrangements in accordance with host's availability to welcome and support exchange students.
- Monitors with hosts the cumulative effect of hosting visitors and extent of disruption over time.
- Addresses disproportionate resourcing and promotes equity.

What do host staff say about sustainable practice?

But we all know that the first world is always in an advantageous position when they deal with us. That is the way the system works. Nothing much can be done about it. Reciprocity is the most important aspect for sustainability. It should be pursued even though we have situational constraints in achieving that.

What do sending staff say about sustainable practice?

I hope we get past the point of having to continually nut out how we're resourcing things so that we can actually move on to that focus of how can we work collaboratively with the agencies, what can we offer them, what can they offer us, what can we do together so we move to that part of it as well.

You don't really know if your program is successful unless you ask your host provider. Ask the host whether they noticed a change in the students this year, did they notice a change in their relationship with the sending organisation, do they feel better about their relationship now?

What do students say about sustainable practice?

It would be great if the next group could take off where we left off, where there was some continuity and you're not rebuilding all those relationships again ... so that they're familiar with the academic. Maybe one of the academics could be the same one and then a new one, so you're continuing that link and building the connections and continuity with the organisations on the ground.



Foster authentic relationships

Student exchange takes place within the context of a broader international relationship. Authentic relationships are developed through the time and space to be together, developing an understanding of partner contexts, building trust and open communication, navigating intercultural understanding, and ensuring mutual benefit. Reflexive practice is important to consider power imbalances and review decision making processes. Hosts described this as a continuum ranging from an agreed agenda, through to a negotiated or a power based agenda.



An approach to exchange that fosters authentic relationships:

- Creates opportunities for open communication.
- Enables time and space for partners to be together, virtually or face-to-face.
- Values appreciation and acknowledgment in cross-cultural relationships.
- Avoids taking advantage of hospitable cultures.
- Focuses on long-term mutual benefit.
- Recognises that collaborative processes can still be subject to power imbalances.
- Uses joint decision making processes.
- Documents, understands and shares strategies for managing risk.
- Explores how relationships can be strengthened and inclusive, beyond personal connections.
- Works with exchange partners prior to, during and after exchange programs.
- Reviews successes and challenges when planning future programs.
- Enables host staff to move beyond a hosting and support role toward accreditation and assessment.
- Values the professional expertise of local supervisors and staff.
- Promotes student learning through relationships with host staff, students and families.

What do host staff say about authentic relationships?

We should have an open discussion ... about the program. What your requirement or what your purpose when sending your student to come here. ... like assessment, like contract, and also we should have a binding contract...because we work for institutions or university, so it's a very important document for us. It's not like ok, I agree to welcome you, but it's agreement approval from higher authorities.

Universities coming from abroad should recognise the fact that we are competent enough to work with your students, ... I think we are competent enough in teaching, in our skills and in our research to actually work with international students we are also telling international universities we are competent enough to assess your students, if you want to come here then you also need to trust us and believe that we are competent enough to assess your students.

What do sending staff say about authentic relationships?

I need to make a biannual trip to the university to India just to work with them in terms of the relationship and – the University does not value that, so they are unlikely to fund that.... while the school might acknowledge the need to be reciprocal and to work on those relationships, when push comes to shove in terms of allocating financial resources, that probably isn't a high priority.

"something we have been struggling a bit, the university here in Australia is a big entity and they have their own perception of risk management... a lot of organisations that do not have the same indemnity insurance or all this other bits and pieces that we do here, but that doesn't mean that they are bad or a bad risk, it is just a different risk... nobody has ever told me ..how we look at this from the other side.

What do students say about authentic relationships?

Just even having the opportunity to live in a host family and be part of those day-to-day conversations that families have around the table. ..., we would have those with our host family ...we were talking a lot about politics and various different things about Samoa and development of the country, and so even just those day-to-day conversations were really good learning experiences. So nothing that was actually set up or that was in the learning environment necessarily but just because we were in the culture and had access to just general conversation, that was a real learning.



Commit to reciprocal partnerships

Reciprocity is a contested concept with multiple cultural and contextual interpretations. Reciprocal processes respect host organisations' aspirations for reciprocity in their context based on their interests, priorities and future directions. Reciprocal practice establishes equity in relationships, addresses disparities in finances and processes, challenges a Western lens of mutual benefit, and transforms both partners as a result of their relationship. While exchange takes place through a variety of arrangements, including contracting out to third party providers, a commitment to reciprocity remains important. Reciprocity for students at a peer-to-peer level, where intercultural learning takes place through relationships with staff and students from host countries, enhances the development of global citizenship and the understanding of mutual learning.



An approach to exchange that commits to reciprocal partnerships:

- Applies a critical lens to explore reciprocity from the perspective of host and sending organisation.
- Challenges assumptions, and allows space for partners to articulate reciprocity in their context.
- Establishes equity in relationships and addresses differences in resources and power.
- Reviews each partner's commitment (including third party providers) to sustainable, ethical and reciprocal practice.
- Creates change for all partners through two-way learning and adaptation to each partner's practices.
- Enriches curriculum through learning from exchange partners.
- Values diverse knowledge in collaborative research, and avoids the push to make local knowledge more 'academic'.
- Promotes peer-to-peer learning.
- Builds staff and student relationships before and after exchange experiences using online technology.
- Offers host students the opportunity to assist visiting students to navigate their international experience.

What do host staff say about reciprocity?

We talk about exchange, but really is it exchange? Because it's students coming into our program, and whilst national staff have an opportunity to exchange thoughts and ideas and concepts and theories, is it really an exchange?

The other limitation is us being able to send professors... We think that there is a lot to learn from our experience. Our experience, our application of human rights, our application of gender analysis, our application of various deals of contemporary social work of migration, the issues of migration. There are many areas we too can share with the students and schools but we don't have funding for that either. It's the money situation that creates this imbalance between a developed country and a developing country. I think that's a huge gap.

If we don't really send students out to experience it with their own eyes, it will be a loss for them. If they had a chance it would be great to really see things in other countries.

What do sending staff say about reciprocity?

It's more about understanding and becoming closer in our understanding and more celebrating our common humanity than anything else. And sharing in a global understanding of social justice and human wellbeing.

It is really important to look at the skill sets we want our students to have, at the same time it does take away from the understanding of the work that we do in the relationship space and reciprocity is such an important part of that because if we want to send our students to partner universities... what is in it for them? How are we learning and sharing from each other?

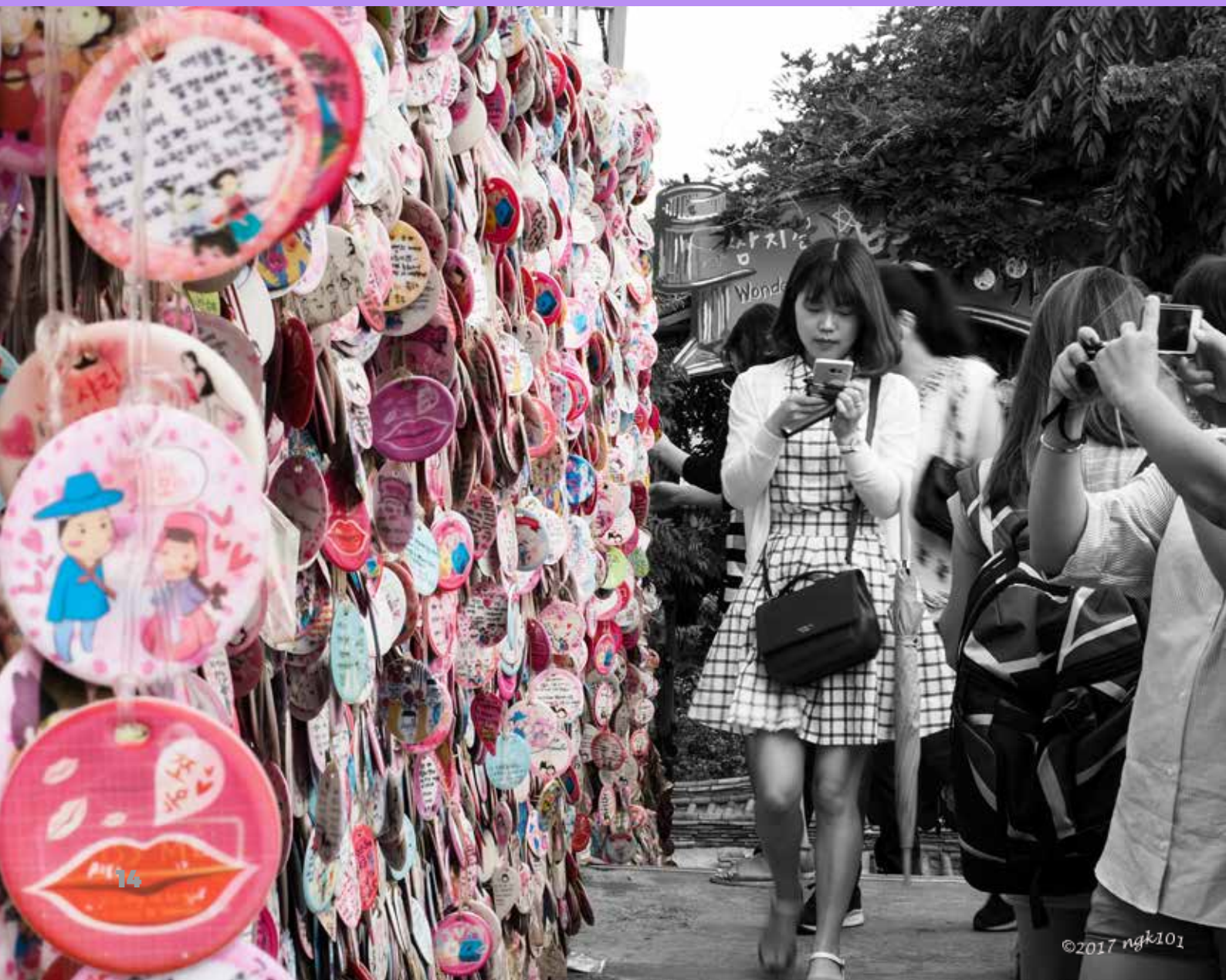
What do students say about reciprocity?

The Indonesian students were the best source of support that we had in the way that we shared so much in common in terms of your basic level social work values in terms of respect for people, autonomy, but they were also able to highlight to us the key differences culturally and they had those skills of a developing practitioner in explaining to us and understanding our perspective so that was really great.



Apply a critical lens to intercultural learning and global perspectives

Intercultural learning is a two-way process and is enhanced by developing an awareness of the influence of our cultural-self. Experiences of privilege, racism, colonisation and imperialism impact on our understanding of culture and cultural difference. Intercultural learning requires educators to intentionally create a safe cultural learning space for both visiting and hosting staff and students, prior to, during and following an international experience.



An approach to exchange that applies a critical lens to intercultural learning and global perspectives:

- Provides time and space for hosts to guide and facilitate pre-departure preparation.
- Engages staff and students in critical preparation that covers intercultural communication, privilege, racism, colonisation and imperialism.
- Develops staff and student awareness about the influence of their cultural self on their interpretation of events and information.
- Balances student learning through 'doing' with observation, and developing respect for host knowledge and experience.
- Fosters openness to professional practice in different contexts.
- Recognises the strengths of alternative approaches.
- Commits to language training to reduce relationship barriers and increase rapport.
- Enables diverse students to access international exchange opportunities.

What do host staff say about a critical lens for intercultural learning?

The broadening of minds is an important result of this exercise. Students begin to see that they cannot simply judge other cultures as either good or bad. They also begin to have a concrete experience of different social and value systems. It surely amplifies what they learn in their classroom in terms of international social work practices and cross cultural community.

They don't go there just as students who are all excited to study, look around, travel and all and come back, I always tell my students and students who come from all the other countries to us, I just tell them you're pilgrims, your experience here is totally different from what a tourist would experience here because it's a lot of self-learning, self-awareness in terms of all the global standards of social work that are there, it starts with self.

What do sending staff say about a critical lens for intercultural learning?

There is a difference when you're part of the majority culture and working cross-culturally, and when you suddenly find that you are actually as a minority and being able to deal with that and learn that you – more about the fact you have a culture of your own and what you bring to practice in that way.

What do students say about a critical lens for intercultural learning?

We're there to support and observe. We're not there to say well you should be doing this. They're doing, ... amazing work... and they're making a difference.... I don't think we have the right to judge and should never judge.

We had many conversations prior to leaving about going in and seeing it as a learning experience – not going in as educated white rich people who could have expert opinions or anything like that. We just went in as students and we really tried to embrace their skills and knowledge that were offered on the ground.



Facilitate and guide transformative learning

Facilitated learning supports students through reflection on their experiences. This requires skilled educators with the time and structures in place to guide student experiences. They balance regular support with the discomfort and ambiguity students need to experience for transformative learning. International experiences offer great potential for student learning and may lead to increased intercultural competence, global citizenship and the development of professional identity. However, immersion without facilitation and critical pedagogy is risky, it can reinforce racism and professional imperialism.



An approach to exchange that facilitates and guides transformative learning:

- Designs curriculum and pedagogy with students' personal and professional learning goals.
- Integrates critical intercultural learning into the curriculum for the benefit of travelling and non-travelling students.
- Supports educators in skill development for intercultural sensitivity, critical group facilitation, and debriefing.
- Works with students to establish learning goals that build on prior experiences and extend their understanding of professional practice.
- Assists students to recognise that pathways to achieve learning goals may be flexible and unanticipated.
- Cultivates student openness to difference and awareness that things don't always go to plan.
- Supports students practically and emotionally through disorienting experiences that can assist with transformative learning.
- Guides student self and group reflections on cultural difference, misunderstandings, critical incidents and appropriate behaviour.
- Works with students post-exchange to reflect on how their learnings will inform their professional practice.
- Evaluates the exchange between host staff and students to inform future program structures, curriculum and pedagogy.

What do hosts say about facilitated and guided learning?

Appreciate the opportunity to learn from a different setting and a different context and that it's going to make them a different person, not only as a professional but as a person in themselves. It's an experience that nobody can take away from them.

When they are in a safe environment with their peer group, they can ask questions to their peer group and it may not be that intimidating – here the actual learning happens without fear and judgement.

What do sending staff say about facilitated and guided learning?

It is important NOT to protect the students from feeling unsettled. ... part of the experience of unsettledness is part of the transformational process, and so that you need to support them, but you also need to allow them to work through it.

Help students move to that next level of observing and understanding and making sense, and then questioning the way they make sense of something that's important.... students can look but they don't necessarily see, unless we help them see.

How they then embed that learning? ... I've got no doubt that they get a learning experience from it, but...whether that becomes part of their professional identity...I don't know.

What do students say about facilitated and guided learning?

There could be some resources about creating a supportive relationship with your supervisor in a cross cultural context ... like, how do you bring up difficult topics, how do you be critical in a non-confronting way because there's certainly ways to talk to someone in ways which are better.

I found, the experience really exciting and really enriching and really fulfilling a lot of the time. But a lot of the time I also found living in a different culture, a different language, a different country, quite emotionally and physically exhausting. I was surprised at the huge highs of getting to meet these amazing people who are really serving the poor and doing all the things we talk about in social work like human rights, and social justice and going to the people and an empowerment approach. But also, I was amazed at how exhausting and draining it can be to live and work in another culture, in another country.

