Chapter 7
Blended Learning Internationalization from the Commonwealth:
An Australian and Canadian Collaborative Case Study

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This case depiction addresses the contentious issue of providing culturally and globally accessible teaching and learning to international students in universities in the Commonwealth nations of Australia and Canada. The chapter describes the university systems and cultures, the barriers to authentic higher education internationalization, and the problems frequently experienced by international students. Two university cases are presented and analysed to depict and detail blended learning approaches (face-to-face combined with e-learning) as exemplars of culturally and globally accessible higher education and thereby ideologically grounded internationalization. Lessons learned are presented at the systems level and as teaching and learning solutions designed to address pedagogical problems frequently experienced by international students in the areas of communication, academic skills, teaching and learning conceptualization, and moving from rote learning to critical thinking. The blended learning solutions are analysed through the lens of critical theory.

SITUATION BACKGROUND

The *cultural and global accessibility* of a university's teaching and learning is a direct measure of whether the university's development mission is to promote intercultural education and world-wide networks or whether that higher education institution recruits international students primarily as lucrative export-industry goods. *Culture* is

the overall mindset shaped in a time and place and shared by a group of individuals. When individuals such as international students leave their group they typically carry a mindset with them from their culture of origin to their culture of study. This definition of culture is grounded in Hofstede's (2001) model. He defined culture as "collective programming of the mind" (p. 1). He explained that "it manifests itself not only in values, but in more superficial ways: in symbols, heroes, and rituals" (p. 1). *Cultural accessibility* means that faculty members actively design their teaching to ensure that *all* of their students are learning, through interaction with the instructor, their student peers and with globally responsible and responsive content (McBurnie, 2000). Lanham and Zhou (2003) wrote, "the inclusion of multiple cultures in university courses means that a more flexible approach should be taken with the design of these courses to ensure that all students are able to reach their course goals" (p. 278). Cultural accessibility can only be understood against the backdrop of internationalization which is a conflicted interplay between economy, pedagogy, and ideology (Meiras, 2004).

Surging in the mid 1990s, enrolment of international students in developed Commonwealth nations became a profitable industry (Davies & Harcourt, 2007; De Vita, 2007; Poole, 2001). The economic advantage of international student enrolment drove an operational or business stance on internationalization (De Vita & Case, 2003; Edwards et.al., 2003). De Vita and Case contrasted the economic stance of universities "expand[ing] their financial base by using international students as a source of revenue" with the ideological stance in which the primary work of universities is "preparing students to live and work in a multicultural society through greater understanding and respect for other cultures" (p. 385). While cultural accessibility is a laudable goal, there is a great deal of contemporary discourse presenting universities as more interested in capitalism than knowledge

emancipation (Cimbala, 2002; Gunn, 2000; Huff, 2006; Murray & Dollery, 2005; Versluis, 2004).

Numerous critical theorists argue that administrators have paid so much attention to the profitability of internationalization that universities have not supported the needs of the international student nor benefitted from the knowledge and understanding brought by students from diverse cultures. In short, critics argue that issues of economic viability have diverted attention from the student experience. Davies and Harcourt (2007) wrote, "…considerable funds are spent on marketing and raising expectations when in fact the relationship between the academic staff member and the student is a key source of satisfaction" (p. 122). Brown and Jones (2007) wrote, "…to date, recruitment of international students has been seen by many primarily as a source of income generation, a 'cash cow', and often diverse students, once recruited, were problematised by the academy and seen as needy of support in a kind of deficit model" (p. 2). Brown and Joughin (2007) wrote that once in-program, international students are perceived as "bearers of problems" whereas universities would benefit from perceiving them as "bearers of culture" (p. 58). Post-secondary providers are metaphorically accused of rolling out the red carpet for international student entry, leading to the teaching and learning equivalent of a dungeon rather than palace once the students are inside. This might be as subtle as expectations of references and examples that are institutionally recognized rather than student experienced or as overt as food and dress standards that smell or look correct to the mainstream population.

From May through September 2009, Australia saw a hotbed of media activity reporting accounts of mistreatment of international students and the government's response. Waters and MacBean (May 29, 2009) for *ABC News*; Millar and Doherty (June 1, 2009) for *The Age*, and; Wong (July 13, 2009) as a guest contributor to the *Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at Australian National University* made seven key points. First,

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