



Some Reflections on the Challenges and Opportunities of the CCP Asia and Australia's Engagement With Asia in the Australian Curriculum

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Introduction

Three decades ago, Stephen Kemmis (1990) argued that curricula provide insights into how nations and states interpret themselves and how they want to be interpreted. He also noted that 'debates about curriculum reveal fundamental concerns, uncertainties and tensions which preoccupy nations and states as they struggle to adapt to changing circumstances' (Kemmis, 1990, p. 32). This empirical paper draws from the literature to review the inclusion of the Cross-Curriculum Priorities (CCP) as one of three basic dimensions of the Australian Curriculum. In doing so, this paper argues that the CCPs can be viewed as indicative of the curriculum challenges Kemmis canvassed and it raises questions about how particular approaches to curriculum can be integrated into subject-based curricula. In particular, the discussion focuses on the CCP of Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia as a contested form of knowledge in the current curriculum, together with some of the challenges and opportunities Geography teachers face in planning to implement this CCP.

The Context

The Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) made clear that young Australians need to engage with, and better understand, the world so they can navigate both major changes arising from global integration and challenges prompted by complex environmental, social and economic pressures that extend beyond national borders. It also noted that Asia literacy, that is, knowledge and understanding about Asia, was on the agenda for school education, and 'engaging and building strong relationships with Asia' (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4) was significant for Australia's future as a country located in the Asia region. This marked the first time an Asia priority was addressed in the national goals for schooling in Australia.

The Shape of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2012), written to guide the development of the new curriculum, reiterated this focus. It also attended to the intercultural aspects of people-

to-people connections and positioned the Asia priority as a reflection of the importance of young people knowing about Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia 'because as they develop a better understanding of the countries and cultures of the Asia region, they will come to appreciate the economic, political and cultural interconnections that Australia has with the region' (p. 22).

It must be noted that this focus was reiterated in slightly different terminology in the most recent statement of national education goals, released in December 2019. Goal 2 of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration noted that all young Australians need to become 'informed and responsible global and local members of the community who value and celebrate cultural and linguistic differences, and engage in the global community, particularly with our neighbours in the Indo-Pacific regions' (Education Council, 2019, p. 6). The current wording reflects the Australian government's shift to focus its diplomatic attention to what it terms the *Indo-Pacific* region. In this context, India is considered a future economic power and possible hedge against China. Moreover, in the face of an uncertain United States ally and a more assertive China, the Australian government now views partnerships with major Indo-Pacific democracies, such as those with India, Japan, Indonesia and South Korea, as a means of shaping the future regional order (see Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2017). It remains to be seen how the emphasis on the Indo-Pacific region, which is indicative of Kemmis' (1990) reflection that curricula reflect a nation's efforts to adapt to changing circumstances, will be incorporated into the review of the Foundation-Year 10 Australian Curriculum, announced by education ministers on 12 June 2020.

For the purposes of the discussion in this paper, attention is now focused on the current version of the Australian Curriculum. In an attempt to address the Melbourne Declaration's goals, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA, 2020a) adopted a three-dimensional design for the Australian

Curriculum, incorporating discipline-based learning areas, and seven essential twenty-first century skills identified as general capabilities. As the third structural component, three key areas of importance, identified for their contemporary relevance, were selected for inclusion as Cross-Curriculum Priorities. These were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia, and Sustainability. The assumption was that the three priorities would be dealt with, where relevant, through the learning areas across the years of schooling from Foundation to Year 10. It was also anticipated that the CCPs would contribute to the development of some of the general capabilities including intercultural understanding, critical and creative thinking, and ethical understanding. Yet because the Australian Curriculum did not specifically address *how* the listed content descriptions for each learning area could be achieved, this presented a challenging curriculum space for teachers to negotiate in practice. Indeed, something of the CCPs' nebulous location can be gathered from the way they are described in the Australian Curriculum:

Cross-curriculum priorities are only addressed through learning areas and do not constitute curriculum on their own, as they do not exist outside of learning areas. Instead, the priorities are identified wherever they are developed or have been applied in content descriptions. They are also identified where they offer opportunities to add depth and richness to student learning in content elaborations. They will have a strong but varying presence depending on their relevance to the learning area (ACARA, 2020b).

Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia cross-curriculum priority in the curriculum

Currently, the Asia priority is positioned to provide a regional context for learning in all learning areas of the Australian Curriculum, and it has been developed around three key concepts that convey its essential knowledge, understandings and skills (ACARA, 2020c).

The first key concept highlights the diversity within and between the countries of the Asia region, from their cultures, societies and traditions through to their diverse environments and the effects of these on the lives of people. The second key concept examines the past and continuing achievements of the peoples of Asia, identifies their contribution to world history, and acknowledges the influences that the Asia region has on the world's aesthetic and creative pursuits. The third key concept addresses the nature of past

and ongoing links between Australia and Asia, and develops the knowledge, understanding and skills which make it possible to engage actively and effectively with people of the Asia region.

Each concept contains organising ideas that provide a scaffold for developing related knowledge, understanding and skills. These are embedded in the content of each learning area according to its relevance to the organising ideas. An organising idea may draw on content from more than one learning area. Taken as a set, the organising ideas provide a framework for the priority. In the Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) learning area, students can investigate the diversity of cultures, values, beliefs, histories and environments that exist between and within the countries of the Asia region, and how this diversity influences the way people interact with each other, the places where they live, and the social, economic, political and cultural systems of the region as a whole. Teachers are also expected to link these ideas to the related general capability of intercultural understanding (ACARA, 2020d).

Yet despite these guidelines, the CCPs presented uncharted waters, for teachers in Australia had not engaged with this sort of curriculum structure before. With specific reference to the CCP of Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia, teachers also faced an assemblage of contradictions. The discussion now highlights some of the theoretical and epistemological issues concerned with *knowing Asia* as a CCP, prior to examining the curricula implications for decision-making in teaching Geography.

Confusions and Contradictions

What sort of curriculum knowledge?

Curriculum scholars such as Ivor Goodson (1988) remind us that the curriculum is made in a variety of arenas and at various levels, whilst others emphasise its different forms (Kennedy, 2019; Ross, 2000; van den Akker & Voogt, 1994). In this context, the 'official' planned or mandated curriculum can be envisaged as 'formal and/or intended' and composed of authoritative statements of rationales, aims, objectives or intended learning outcomes accompanied by itemised content and/or concepts to be known. The conceptual knowledge space the CCP Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia occupies in the official, or intended curriculum (Goodson, 1988), is indicative of the challenges facing all three CCPs. In terms of curriculum theory, the CCPs can be situated in 'the domain of possibility'. That is, as emerging forms of knowledge, the CCPs are positioned to enhance the 'powerful knowledge' (Young, 2007, 2013) of the established disciplines identified as Key

Learning areas, or 'domain of certainty' in the curriculum.

The notion of powerful knowledge has been discussed at length by the English sociologist of education Michael Young (2013, 2014), whose work calls for a return to the subject-based curriculum as the most important aspect of learning, rather than curriculum variations that emphasise other forms of knowledge. Examples of the latter include initiatives prompted by an emphasis on the general international developments of 21st-century skills, and by integrated approaches to curriculum (Young, 2007, 2011, 2012; Young & Muller, 2013, 2016). It must also be noted that Young's criticisms address a number of aspects of recent educational thinking and practice. For example, he argues that there is an over-emphasis on constructivist approaches to students' learning needs and what is meaningful to them through everyday knowledge, rather than on the intrinsic significance of specialist knowledge in the disciplines (Young, 2013, p. 106). Essentially, Young (2007) has called for a revived focus on knowledge in the curriculum, on 'bringing knowledge back in'.

Other scholars critique aspects of Young's arguments (Scott, 2014; Roberts, 2014; Zipin et al., 2015). White (2018) argues that most of the school subjects which Young views as providing powerful knowledge actually fall short on this requirement. White also suggests that the pursuit of powerful, or theoretical knowledge, has to be weighed up against those other goals of schooling which extend beyond the acquisition of discipline-based knowledge. He refers to the different forms of knowledge an individual applies and uses in various contexts, noting that 'practical know-how of many sorts, the world of the arts, personal development, and learning to become a citizen of a democracy are examples' (White, 2018, p. 329). Hence, the positioning of the CCPs in the Australian Curriculum also raises longstanding questions about what an education might entail, what knowledge is for, and what sort of knowledge is required in the national interest (Henderson, 2005; Kennedy, 2019).

In terms of the politics of knowledge in the curriculum, two often divergent positions can be ascertained in the literature. As noted above, one epistemological standpoint is that knowledge of traditional subject disciplines (Young, 2007, 2013) is emphasised in curricula aimed at establishing what young people ought to *learn*. By contrast, as suggested by White (2018), an emphasis on learning that shapes what young people ought to *become* is evident in curricula that address notions of building competencies and capabilities for the future (see Biesta, 2012; Biesta & Priestley,

2013). In this sense, the Melbourne Declaration's (MCEETYA, 2008) goals, and subsequent tripartite structure of the Australian Curriculum, can be viewed as a winner takes all approach that aims to cover both epistemological standpoints (ACARA, 2020a).

Knowing Asia?

Another layer of complexity relates to the construct of *Asia*, a term that conflates a variety of places, spaces, cultures, histories, languages, societies and politics. Until recently, there has been little emphasis on Asia in Australian curriculum documents or school textbooks. Where content on Asia is offered, it often has an Australian or Western focus, or, more recently, it is encompassed within a broad regional emphasis as part of fostering global perspectives. A concern raised by educators is that many teachers have a limited personal knowledge base of the region's diversity to draw upon. Research commissioned by the Asia Education Foundation (AEF) (Wilkinson et al., 2009) found that, in practice, teachers are not likely to select curriculum emphases and materials with which they themselves are unfamiliar or may have never studied. It is not surprising that teachers will tend to choose what they know about, and if their school and tertiary studies have not included a focus on Asian studies, they may be less likely to incorporate it into their own teaching.

This is one of the reasons why teachers have grappled with planning and implementing learning in this field and it prompts the following question. How might a Geography teacher make informed choices about what *Asia* is to be studied and ensure that integrating learning from and about the region's diverse human and physical realm is both authentic and balanced? As Kriewaldt & Fahey (2018, p. 354) observe, 'teachers may need support to improve their own knowledge and understanding of the Asia-Pacific to better incorporate relevant content in their teaching'.

A third factor arises from economic utility of the term *Asia literacy* and its invocation of conflicting emphases. On the one hand, the term's instrumental inclusion in education policy as Asia-related knowledge and skills for the future workforce (Henderson, 2015), implies that teachers are expected to plan for learning about Asia in ways that deliver economically-driven learning outcomes. On the other hand, the notion of literacy as social practice, that is, the intercultural literacy of living and learning with others, invokes teachers being responsive to difference in multicultural classrooms and pursuing culturally-inclusive teaching practices. From this perspective, the CCP of Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia, presents

Geography teachers with some ethical dilemmas. As Kostogriz (2015, p. 103) puts it, teachers are presented with 'a quandary between the culture of educational accountability and the relational culture of everyday teaching practice'. The latter refers to teaching in culturally-inclusive ways whereby a Geography teacher's pedagogical orientation responds to human differences and similarities as qualities to be valued and respected in teaching and learning about others (see Rizvi, 2008).

To further complicate matters, some conservative educators expressed concern that a focus on Asia undermines the *British* nature of Australian heritage. Elements of this standpoint were evidenced in the pre-emptive review of the Australian Curriculum (Henderson, 2018). For example, the final report of the Review of the Australian Curriculum (Donnelly & Wiltshire, 2014) contended that the CCPs emerged 'as possibly the most complex, controversial, and confusing aspect of the Australian Curriculum' (p. 134). Whilst some aspects of this critique were indicative of the uncertainty about how the CCPs could be implemented, it was, however, largely symbolic of the tensions identified in Kemmis' (1990) observations about curricula debates. That is, Donnelly & Wiltshire's critique of the CCPs reflected the worldviews of those conservatives preoccupied with cultural conflict (Hay, 2016).

Asia and Australia's relationship with Asia

The geographical construct of Asia includes 70% of the world's population, 30% of the land surface and is one of the seven continents on Earth. The countries of the Asia region encompass a rich diversity of environments, people and cultures. Three out of four of the largest economies in the world are located in Asia. It is predicted that by 2050 the Asian population will grow to more than five billion, Asia will produce half of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and China will become the largest and India the second largest economies in terms of GDP. Hence, it might be argued that Asia's economic transformation cannot be ignored for it is reshaping the global distribution of power 'with profound implications for war and peace in the twenty-first century' (Lowy Institute, 2019).

For generations, Australian attitudes towards Asia and the Pacific were shaped by the European colonial age (Henderson, 2015). Edward Said (1979) demonstrated how, during this era, European explorers, intellectuals and settlers relied on their own cultural frames of reference to describe and interpret the 'other' cultures they encountered or imagined. The resultant scholarly misrepresentation of different cultures led to Orientalism; a western cultural phenomenon

based upon ontological and epistemological distinctions that perceived those who lived in the 'east' or 'Asia' as not only inferior and backward, but also exotic and sensual. As Bliss (2005) notes, such Orientalist scholarship served both political goals and cultural beliefs. It distinguished the 'superior Europeans' from the 'inferior others', and it served to affirm the former's right to civilise the 'others' during the colonial era for several centuries. Furthermore, such beliefs and assumptions were often perpetuated in colonial curricula materials so that the limited references to the peoples and cultures of the Asia-Pacific region were reduced to stereotypes. Resources, curriculum development, associated professional development and implementation processes within schools were subsequently foundationally aligned along colonial (British) traditions. These resources did little to challenge the fears amongst some members of the Australian community about Australia being overrun by the 'yellow hordes' of Asia (Walker, 2011).

Since the 1950s, Australian scholars, educators and policy advisors have contested this legacy and advocated prioritising Asian languages and studies in the education system in order to broaden Australia's conceptual framework about the region. Collectively, more recent advocacy stressed the value of broad intellectual and cultural understandings about Asia and noted that those utilitarian benefits, which might accompany such knowledge, were in the national interest (Henderson, 2003, 2015). Significant amongst these were the 1970 Auchmuty Report, which identified the need for Asian studies to be accorded 'parity of esteem' (Auchmuty, 1970, p. 90) with the study of European languages and cultures in the Australian education system; the FitzGerald Report (FitzGerald, 1988) on immigration, which noted the potential of Asia as a source of skilled immigrants; and the Garnaut Report's (Garnaut, 1989) focus on the need to acknowledge north-east Asia as a core region for Australia in terms of both its economic, political and strategic relationships, and its links through migration and education. Meanwhile, the Rudd Report, (Rudd, 1994), advanced an ambitious Asian languages and cultures strategy for Australian schools. Thus, a range of interests prompted attention to Asia in Australian education (Walker & Sobocinska, 2012).

Further, the Australia in the Asian century White Paper (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012), acknowledged that, as Australia's interactions with the countries of Asia have intensified in response to globalisation and regionalisation, young Australians need to understand the cultural diversity of the region and its peoples, not only as a source of migrants but also as a site of critical significance for Australia's economic and strategic

future (Henderson, 2008, 2015). The White Paper's rationale for Australia's engagement was clearly instrumental, as evident in the foreword by (then) Prime Minister Julia Gillard:

In this century, the [Asian] region in which we live will become home to most of the world's middle class. Our region will be the world's largest producer of goods and services and the largest consumer of them (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012, p. ii).

In the Paper's set of National Objectives and pathways to guide Australia to the year 2025, Objective 10 made clear that 'every Australian student will have significant exposure to studies of Asia across the curriculum to increase their cultural knowledge and skills and enable them to be active in the region' (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012, p. 170).

However, despite the instrumentalism of many policy documents, the inclusion of Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia as a cross-curriculum priority in the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2020b) was seen by some educators as an opportunity to build students' capabilities to engage with Asia in a post-Orientalist way. For example, Iwabuchi (2015) contended that studying the societies and cultures of Asia could contribute to the 'de-Westernisation of knowledge formation and the cultivation of a cosmopolitan worldview' (p. xiv). Similarly, others viewed the CCP as an opportunity to achieve education 'governed by principles of cultural coexistence and intercultural awareness' (Kostogriz, 2015, p. 113). Such scholarship also reflected a move away from the focus on Asia literacy to an emphasis on Asia capability.

What do we know about teacher practice?

It could be argued that developing young people's Asia-relevant knowledge, capabilities and dispositions, so they are able to interpret and negotiate 'the possibilities of intercultural relations' (Rizvi, 2012, p. 77), is necessary for understanding what it means to be Australian in an ethnically-diverse world community. Indeed, the Asia Education Foundation (2013) encourages including a future focus on the Asia priority in the Australian Curriculum in ways that authentically develops the general capability of intercultural understanding. However, the literature indicates that meaningful intercultural education requires 'deep shifts in consciousness' among teachers 'rather than the simple pragmatic and programmatic shifts that too often are described as intercultural education' (Gorski, 2008, p. 517). As with teaching Asia-related content, teachers need an intercultural knowledge base and skills to

effectively achieve this in classrooms with their students (Walton et al., 2013; Walton et al., 2014).

There are few studies of teacher practice in this endeavour. In a systematised review of the research literature on Asia literacy in Australian schools over the past 25 years, Halse and Cairns (2018) found that few studies met the inclusion criteria of empirical or theoretical research. Of those studies that met the criteria, the largest proportion relate to Asia literacy policy. Notably, the areas of *least research* concerned curriculum, pedagogy, and student learning. The only large-scale study, *Asia Literacy and the Australian Teaching Workforce* (Halse et al., 2013), was commissioned by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workforce Relations, and managed by the Asia Education Foundation.

The study sought to identify the characteristics, capacities and practices of teachers in teaching the Asia priority in the Australian Curriculum. Data included a national survey, narrative data collected from teachers and principals, as well as case studies of Asia-literate teachers at different points on the career continuum from different schools in Australia. As might be expected, one of the findings was that local practices of building Asia literacy in schools were influenced by teachers' personal histories and experiences of becoming Asia literate. One of the survey questions asked teachers about their motivators for becoming Asia literate. Analysis of the 800 responses identified seven key motivators. These included:

- Asia experiences via work, study, travel or family;
- Desire to address prejudice and racism;
- Local or overseas school connections to Asia;
- Substantial tertiary and/or professional learning;
- Commitment to Asia in the curriculum;
- Need to prepare students for a global world;
- Personal inspiration and change (Halse et al., 2013, p. 10).

Many of the teachers participating in the study have rich experience travelling, living and working in various Asian countries. Such experiences appear to be instrumental in forming attitudes and beliefs about Asia, its diversity, what constitutes Asia literacy, and how teachers teach and respond to their students. Teachers participating in the study also emphasised the value of professional education and ongoing professional learning, so that their pedagogy effectively impacts on student learning.

The study identified five enablers that support teachers to deliver the Asia priority in the Australian Curriculum. These included:

- Experience of Asia from work, study, travel, or family connections;
- Substantial, ongoing tertiary study and/or professional learning;
- School connections to the countries of Asia;
- Support from their school and school system;
- Asian language taught in school (Halse et al., 2013, p. 13).

The authors also suggested that the professional and personal connections many schools have with Asian countries represent pedagogic resources that could be better utilised. These findings offer hope that teachers can embed the CCP of Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia beyond an instrumental understanding of Asia and Australia-Asia relations.

Relatedly, students need opportunities to consider how knowledge about Asia and Asia-Australia relations is constructed and represented; that is, the ways in which content is selected and pedagogically organised to develop particular attitudes towards Asian places, people, cultures and societies. To achieve this, locating learning about Asia within 'a broader commitment to intercultural understanding, both within Australia and throughout the region' (Rizvi, 2017, p. 68) is required. In this regard, the AEF increasingly refers to 'Asia capability' as a way of developing intercultural understanding and cohesion in Australian society and in school communities as they become more culturally diverse in response to Australia's changing demography. In 2019, 28 per cent of the population was born overseas, a further 20 per cent have at least one overseas-born parent, and Asian-Australians now constitute an increasing presence in Australian society (see Evans, 2019). Given these demographics, Asia capability can be viewed as a proactive response to the growing diversity of students in multicultural classrooms (Kostogriz, 2015). It must also be noted that the terms 'Asia' and 'Asia-Pacific' and, most recently, 'Indo-Pacific', are increasingly used interchangeably in the literature and curriculum documents in this regard.

Opportunities for teaching and learning in Geography

As noted, a strong argument can be made that an emphasis on learning about Asia, and recognising the significance of Australia's location in the Asia-Pacific region in the curriculum for all students, is long overdue. Geography teachers are uniquely placed to engage students in understanding the nature of our connections to the region. The

Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography (ACARA, 2011, p. 3) encapsulated the discipline's capacity to achieve this:

Geography teaching nurtures students' curiosity about places and the differences between them. It responds to their wonder about the world and its diversity, and teaches them how to explore this world directly through field work and indirectly through other types of investigation. It develops a geographical imagination that enables students to relate to other places and people, and to appreciate the cultures and perspectives of others.

Developing students' understanding of the diversity of Asia and Australia's engagement with the people of the region can be deepened in Geography as it provides a structured way of exploring, analysing and understanding the characteristics of the places that constitute the region. As the Australian Curriculum version 8.4 makes clear, Geography 'enables students to question why the world is the way it is, and reflect on their relationships with and responsibilities for that world' and it helps them 'to be regional and global citizens capable of active and ethical participation' (ACARA, 2020e). Furthermore, the National Committee for Geographical Sciences, (2018, p. 43) observes:

The Asia-Pacific region is our regional neighbourhood and we have growing connections with its countries and peoples. Geographical research and teaching make a major contribution to educating and informing Australians about the region.

Chapter 7, The Asia-Pacific region, provides a rich discussion of recent geographical work on the region on a wide variety of topics that students will find rewarding to investigate (see National Committee for Geographical Sciences, 2018, pp. 43–47).

Learning explicit content

The Australian Curriculum for Geography provides authentic opportunities for students to learn explicit content about Asia through various geographical inquiries in the curriculum for F-6/7, and in the 7-10 curriculum topics. Critical to the two-strand model to organise the key learnings at each year level is that both strands are to be considered together to ensure learning is integrated and students develop the ability to 'think geographically, using geographical concepts' (ACARA, 2020e). In her review of the literature, Sorensen (2009, p. 13) noted there was strong support for a curriculum 'shaped by the concepts that are distinctive to geography'.

As noted earlier, the curriculum also presents opportunities to foster geographical knowledge, understanding and skills through three key CCP concepts – Asia and its diversity, the achievements and contributions of the peoples of Asia, and Asia-Australia engagement. The following examples from the Geography Curriculum’s Sequence of content knowledge and understanding for Years 7-10 (ACARA, 2020e) indicate how students can build on their understanding of the geographic concepts of place, space, environment, interconnection, sustainability and change and apply this understanding to investigate a wide range of places, environments and issues in the Asia-Pacific region.

Water in the world involves students investigating the economic, cultural, spiritual and aesthetic value of water for people, including peoples of the Asia region (ACHGK041).

Year 7 students can investigate the path of the Mekong River through six countries, examine the effect that damming has on the river and the livelihoods of those living on or near the river. In Year 7 or Year 8, students can investigate the controversy surrounding the construction of Three Gorges Dam and its impact on the Chinese people and environment. Students can use infographics, maps and websites to convey information and opinion and design their own infographic to communicate their understanding of the human and environmental impacts of the Three Gorges Dam.

Changing nations provides opportunities for students to study the causes and consequences of urbanisation, by drawing on a study from Indonesia, or another country of the Asia region (ACHGK054). Students in Year 8 can also investigate the rate of urbanisation, development and redevelopment that is occurring in many parts of China. They can explore the impact on rural migrants from the western provinces seeking employment in China’s mega-cities, the shortage of affordable accommodation, chronic pollution and displacement of many city dwellers due to rapid building development. In Year 9, students can investigate how Shanghai and its Pudong District have developed into an economic hub with a chronic shortage of affordable housing and how these factors impact on the livelihood of the local people.

Geographies of interconnection can include opportunities for students to learn about the effects of the production and consumption of goods on places and environments throughout the world and including a country from North-East Asia (ACHGK068). Students in Year 9 can examine the impact of industrialisation on South Korea’s

natural environment, investigate the country’s progress towards sustainable development, and study recent efforts to safeguard the natural environment. Students can also investigate the production and manufacture of clothing in Bangladeshi factories, the living and working conditions of local people, and the sale of such goods in Australian department stores. Students can inquire into campaigns to prohibit goods produced by prisoners in some Asian countries, forced labor and children that are offered for sale in Australia and other parts of the region. In doing so, they can investigate matters relating to human rights.

Geographies of human wellbeing provide opportunities for students to examine the reasons for, and consequences of, spatial variations in human wellbeing on a regional scale within India or another country of the Asia region (ACHGK079) (ACARA, 2020e). This descriptor presents an opportunity for students in Year 10 to learn about differences in wellbeing across India, how to explain them and how to address stereotypical assumptions about poverty. In small groups, students can investigate case studies on the status of wellbeing in the Dharavi Slum in Mumbai, one of the most densely populated areas in the world. A recent example could refer to how the outbreak of COVID-19 has been managed by an intensive door-knocking and testing regime, despite overcrowding, poor sanitation and limited opportunities for hospital admission. Similarly, students can investigate how wellbeing does not necessarily correlate with the strength of the economy of each state, but is also related to governance. Accordingly, students can investigate what factors contribute to Kerala’s high levels of wellbeing in terms of material prosperity, education, health, housing and low levels of infant mortality despite the state’s modest levels of income. Students develop an understanding of how wellbeing indicators must reflect the cultural context of the people and countries they are measuring, and not rely on using income as a measure of welfare.

Such studies present opportunities for in-depth learning. Further, in each of the above options, students can also inquire into the role of Australian individuals, nonprofit organisations, and other non-government organisations that work with and alongside local people to perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions in the region. In this context, students can gain a more authentic understanding about the ways in which Australia and Asia are interconnected, both environmentally and socially, and how transnational collaboration supports the notion of shared and sustainable futures within the Asia region.

When designing teaching and learning sequences to develop Asia-relevant capabilities, Geography teachers need to be mindful of the synergies between this CCP and the general capabilities, with a particular focus on intercultural understanding, critical and creative thinking, ICT capability, personal and social capability, and ethical understanding. The AEF suggests that the capabilities are designed to enhance the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions, together with curriculum content in Geography, that will assist students to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century; and that classroom curriculum design should reflect these synergies (see AEF, 2014, 2015).

An Asia capability approach to exploring natural disasters

Of course, it is ultimately up to each Geography teacher to frame the focus of this learning. For example, with reference to the study of natural disasters, such as the 26 December 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, an Asia priority perspective would objectify the phenomenon by investigating statistics, aid together with the who, what, when, where and how it occurred. However, an Asia capability approach aimed at developing intercultural understanding would develop this approach further. For example, it would provide opportunities for students to develop perspective, empathy, respect and reflection. Students could investigate the ways in which the Acehnese viewed the impact of the tsunami in different ways, which has since contributed to the peace process. Students could also study how the Australian government initially allocated minimal financial support but substantially increased its funding to assist with the recovery, as a result of overwhelming social action on the part of various Australian communities.

Collaborations with schools in the region

Some other approaches to fostering Asia capability include teachers and students forming virtual partnerships with fellow teachers and students in schools in the region to explore issues of mutual concern, including how to address ecological and climate challenges. The AEF's teacher professional development program, Building Relationships through Intercultural Dialogue and Growing Engagement (BRIDGE), is an example of how this sort of authentic learning can be successfully achieved. BRIDGE teachers and students at schools in Australia and countries in Asia use such synchronous online platforms as Skype, Zoom and Adobe Connect to collaborate on transnationally connected learning tasks (AEF, 2020). The program is designed to build sustainable partnerships involving curriculum and pedagogy redesign and foster

intercultural mindsets and skillsets within the school communities. Such initiatives provide opportunities for teachers to devise authentic learning experiences, avoid stereotyping, and develop Asia capability.

Conclusion

Embedding the CCP of Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia will help young people to understand and make connections between their own worlds and the worlds of others, to build on shared interests and commonalities, and to negotiate or mediate difference. As Iwabuchi (2015, p. xvi) observed, we need to re-imagine learning about Asia (and the Indo-Pacific) in Australia 'in an inclusive way, in terms of its mutual engagement with other Asian countries and its own composition as a society'. Knowledge of and collaboration with Asia remains critical to understanding and managing the unprecedented challenges of living in the region in the 21st century – a time of pandemics, climate change, increased natural disasters and movements of people. To return to the epistemological debates raised earlier about what education is for and how curricula might best deliver it, this paper argues that both discipline-specific knowledge offered by Geography, together with knowledge of contemporary issues such as highlighted by the Asia priority, are required to help young people to engage with their present world, as well as to prepare them to live in a future complex world. By bringing together the natural and social sciences in a holistic approach, Geography is uniquely placed to help students better understand these issues and challenges and to develop young people's knowledge, understanding and capabilities about the Asia-Pacific region. Fostering such knowledge requires sustained commitment and careful selection of resources – something Geography teachers are well-placed to do.

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