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THE IMAGINATION OF MOBILITY: WINDOWS INTO AUSTRALIAN TEACHER EDUCATION AS A SITE OF TRANSNATIONAL LIFEWORLD NEGOTIATIONS

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Abstract

Current development in global migration flows reveals a rapid increase in student mobility through international education. However, the study of teacher education-migration nexus is relatively unknown in migration and education research. This paper aims to address such a lacuna. Taken from a larger longitudinal study, this paper offers a hermeneutic phenomenological examination of four international pre-service teachers undertaking Masters in Teaching in one large Australian university. They arrive on student visas with the intention to be qualified to teach, and gain permanent resident status, upon graduation in Australia. Such motivation is an important dimension of transnationalism situated within their social imagination of the West. Drawing on Appadurai's (1996) work on imagination, I identify two broad currents that shape their imaginations to migrate to Australia through teacher education studies, namely: Fitting-In that explores the forms, contents and workings of cultural constructions of power that are being played out in the teaching practicum sites; and Looking-Out that explores their continuous struggle to maintain balance between space and relationships which was not experienced back in their home country. These two currents provide nuanced engagements to understanding pre-service teacher-mobility, as a subset of student-migrants, in adopting the identity of a transnational profile. Such currents of imagination are central to understanding how Teacher Education can influence the intercultural adaptations of student-migrants to institutional practices in university and schools, and the ways in which Teacher Education has the potential to shape the capacities and productions of transnational subjects who embody specific forms of fitting-in and looking-out.

Introduction

> *"There is no short cut here in Australia. This is not my country where I can go with my logic as if most of the doors are already opened for me to be a teacher and build a good record. Here I am starting from scratch, they don't care about my previous qualifications, they care about my current abilities and this is how it should be and there is no other short cut but to just push yourself now."* *Haggai (19 July 2009)*

These were indeed a thought-provoking assertion that Haggai (pseudonym) made in one of the many interviews I conducted between 2008 and 2011. Increasingly more international students, like Haggai (an ex-lawyer), because of migration intentions have chosen to enrol in studies that may not be related to their previous careers or qualifications back home. According to Organisation Economic Cooperation and Development, more than four million individuals, like Haggai, were studying for a tertiary qualification outside their home country in 2012 (OECD, 2012). A closer look at United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2014) data shows that, from 2003 – 2013, long-distance migration through education prevails, and continues to show an upward trend in countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia. Such increase in the number of students migrating internationally is indeed a growing global phenomenon, with important national, regional, and temporal implications (Castles & Miller, 2009; Raghuram, 2013; Marginson, 2012; Stratton, 2009). While they are visibly culturally other within 'western' universities and their legal status in the host country defines them as 'temporary outsiders'; they are not homogeneously

defined cultural subjects (Waters & Brooks, 2011). Although recent scholarship on international education-migration sojourn points out the various effects policy pathways or temporary-skilled migration on foreign tertiary students, there is still a dearth of an in-depth empirical investigation into the subjective dimension of border-crossing student mobility in Australia. In order to promote future global intercultural understanding in our current times (Rizvi, 2011), research regarding their intercultural adjustment experiences, both challenges and successes, is therefore an important issue for Australian education-migration nexus.

International education has established itself as the third largest export industry in Australia (Australia Bureau Statistics (ABS), 2011). Current literature (e.g. Marginson et al., 2010; Sherry et al. 2010) frequently documents the unique challenges that international students face in adjusting to Australia higher education. Specifically, international students have to negotiate different academic systems, communication differences, racial and ethnic distinctions and a lack of social interactions with members within the host society (Arkoudis & Tran, 2007; Leask, 2010; Soong, 2013). Australia's encounters with international education and migration nexus are constantly in-flux (Robertson, 2013; Soong, forthcoming). Since mid-2000, much research on the complicated nexus between education and migration have attempted to address policy and labour market integration issues, and the changing discourses shifting outside the boundaries of the education sector (Baas, 2006; Hawthorne, 2010; Neilson, 2009; Robertson, 2011). Despite being framed by their deficits (Birrell et al., 2008) in becoming 'backdoor migrants' through education (Colebatch, 2010), crucial to these discussions is an ambiguity around students' desirability as 'migrant workers' (Robertson, 2011). To understand such desirability, I use Appadurai's (1996) *imagination* as a real-existing social practice and juxtapose it with what transnationalism has to offer, of global mobility and flexible citizenship, to explain the desirability for mobility through education. I also intend to add further nuance to Appadurai's work by emphasising that an important dimension of the student-migrants' desire for border-crossing mobility is their imagination of the 'West'.

While I acknowledge that global mobility of students in the last decade has become more multi-directional (Kell & Vogl, 2010) and classification of an East-West mechanism may sound simplistic, I contend that power still resides in the hands of the dominant West in which 'globalisation' is now regarded as a form of imperialism by another name (Friedman, 1994). One relevant example is the 'West' has been stereotyped as sources of 'supposed objective knowledge' (Conceison, 2004: 57), and not just dominance in consumer culture of Western capitalism or adoption of urban lifestyle or a range of cultural attitudes and values regarding personal liberty, gender and technological rationality (Tomlinson, 1996). Thus, understanding how the imagined 'West' impacts student-migrant mobility as a key concept responsible for effectuating both agency and particular productions of transnational identity form the core of this paper. By taking inspiration from van Manen's work (1990) on exploring and interpreting the experiential dimension of human actions and events, the general aim of this paper is to offer a hermeneutic phenomenological investigation of *how* the imagination of the 'West' evokes student-migrants' desirability for undertaking teacher education studies, as a gateway for transnational education mobility.

This paper first discusses how the education-migration nexus can be conceptualised in terms of contemporary theories of transnationalism and education mobility, particularly around ideas of 'imagination', as desire for flexible citizenship (Ong, 1999) in the West. I then discuss the methods employed in the research, before addressing the nuanced engagement of imagination and experiences of pre-service teacher-migrants across two main themes. I first examine the effects on and flows of transnational education mobility as dual currents of imagination as 'fitting-in' and 'looking-out'. I then address how these currents impact on their lived experiences as members of a local school community. Finally, I address how despite their entangled hopes and anxieties, the work of social imagination has potential outcomes for their education-migration goals as pre-service teacher-migrants.

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'Imagination': Effects on Transnational Education Mobility

Human global mobility has been increasingly shaped by the social imaginaries of what Appadurai (1966) calls as 'imagination of fantasy', to what Bauman (2000) refers to as 'tourists' or what Calhoun (2002) identifies as the 'frequently travelled'. Appadurai (1996) has asserted that because globalization today is 'marked by a new role for imagination in social life' (p. 11), global mobility has become a 'critical part of collective, social, everyday life and is a form of labour' that impacts not only those who moved but also those who remained, as Rizvi (2011) has clearly illustrated.

Over the years, the way human movement is conducted and by whom, has been seen as features of transnationalism (Vectovec, 2004). They include: 'transnationalism from above' referring to cross-border activities conducted by the multinational corporate sector or government or elite controlled processes; or 'transnationalism from below' consisting of activities of immigrants and grassroots entrepreneurs, including the student-migrants in this study. With a great advance in technologies and ease of communication, transnationalism is now understood as an inquiry into the phenomenon of globalisation for individuals and nation-states (Burbules & Torres, 2013; Vertovec, 2009). In describing the increasing activities and flexibility of citizenship arrangements of human movements, Ong predicted how transnationalism can potentially "… [induce] subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political and economic conditions." (1999: 6). Appadurai further argues that the speed of global cultural flows have broken down national boundaries in exceptional ways, causing people to 'no longer see their lives as mere outcomes of the giveness of things, but often as the ironic compromise between what they could imagine and what social life will permit' (1996: p. 54). Based on Benedict Anderson's view that nationalism emerged once people were able to see themselves as part of an 'imagined community', Appadurai (1996) contends that it is such force of imagery that alters how people construct their lives, make their choices, communicate with others and think about their future (p. 4) as part of an imagined world. In reading this way, like Ong (1999), Appadurai is offering an alternative way of thinking and analysing the scope and impact of 'globalisation from below' with rich descriptions of 'a world that has become deterritorialized, diasporic and transnational' (*ibid:*p. 188).

Such is the position that this paper takes in arguing that an important dimension of the student-migrants' motivation for transnationalism and flexible citizenship is their imagination of the 'West' of a global world. The concept of the 'West' as viewed in this paper, is a 'conceptual and historical space' (Venn, 2000: 2) in which the 'process of becoming-West … [is constituted as] … the becoming-modern of the world (*ibid,* 8). Such concept has potentially inscribed Australia, as a magnetic point of destination and a locus of an international education hub, because of what it can imaginatively offer to the student-migrants' future possibilities by taking on life migration strategy in converting their student visa into permanent residency. Building on these ideas, I concur with Robertson (2011) that the categorisations of 'student-migrant' between student, migrant and worker reveal a deeper disruption of the typologies of membership to the nation-state and ideas of rights (p. 4). Yet, building on what Ong (2006) suggests that beyond such typologies of membership, migration is moving towards from a 'citizenship vs. statelessness model' into a far more complex arena. An area that I contend should also represent a shifting membership encompassing between routes/roots (Clifford, 1997) and here/there (Gilroy, 1993).

Rather than claiming to be universal, two broad *currents* that shape the imagination of 'pre-service teacher-migrants' to migrate to Australia through teacher education studies are identified as: *Fitting-In* that explores the specificities of their teaching practicum experiences in various school sites impacting on their sense of agency; and *Looking-Out* that explores their ideas of freedom and access to social, cultural and symbolic security of living in the 'West'. By attending more closely to the *currents* embedded in the desire of the participants in becoming transnational teacher migrant, I offer a nuanced analysis of how Teacher Education, as an intercultural site, can influence the adaptations of student-migrants to institutional practices in university and schools. In doing so, the main thesis of this paper is highlighting the ways in which Teacher Education has the potential to shape the capacities and productions of transnational subjects who embody specific forms of *fitting-in* and *looking-out.* Thus,

this paper provides a window into the site of Australian Teacher Education as generative 'contact zones' (Kenway & Bullen, 2010) by portraying how their daily challenges and opportunities of learning the social, cultural and existential dimensions of transnational lifeworlds can be valuable for other 'pre-service teacher-migrants'. While their experiences are particular to them, their stories do evoke the kinds of emotions, relationships and intentions which are linked to the accounts of others encountering similar difficult sojourns living in similar state of limbo. Their narratives are not only portrayals; they also illustrate how education-migration nexus can be lived.

The Study and Participants

This study was carried out in one large metropolitan university in Australia where about 100 international pre-service teachers enrolled in a two-year Masters in Teaching programme. As mentioned before, the data for this paper was collected from a longitudinal and in-depth study. 7 pre-service teacher-migrants from various source countries, such as: China, India, Sri Lanka, Japan and Israel, volunteered to participate in the study which was conducted from 2008 to 2011. Even though the 'education-migration' policy on 'Teaching' was in a state of flux during that period of time, all the 7 of them were determined to obtain permanent residency through 'pre-service teacher-migrant' pathways. Amongst them, 5 were females and 2 were males, had university degrees back in their home countries which were not related to teaching.

Having been a former 'international' pre-service teacher, my intimate knowledge of the field site certainly expedited the process of my entry into their 'lifeworlds' (Dahlberg et al. 2010), allowing me to submerge into their lived experiences. The one-to-one interviews were conducted as informal conversations over coffee which lasted almost 2 hours per session. In sum, 37 interviews were conducted, recorded and transcribed, and coding for themes were conducted using a mixed of qualitative analysis of using manual, computer software and personal reflective journal. By embedding Ricoeur's (1991) concept of narrative analysis of a past-present-future in the data analysis, the aim of this approach is to obtain an in-depth empirical investigation into the subjective dimension of the participants who were at various stages of their education-migration sojourn. Despite the limited scope of generating findings that are applicable to all pre-service teacher-migrants, I posit that the investigation of this in-depth small study sheds light to understanding the relationships between migratory experiences and their intercultural encounters in the local school communities. Such a site is not only vital to understanding the significance of local school communities as 'contact zones' for all student-migrants. But, for these pre-service teacher participants, their teaching practicum sites are vital to their immediate future: a failure can result in them going back to home countries and not be able to achieve their hopes to become teacher-migrants.

Their life histories reveal the individual experiences, relationships and intentions to study in Australia. In the following accounts, I interweave their voices, thoughts and reflections, as lived episodes on their encounters of negotiating transnational lifeworlds shaping the currents of their imaginations. I do this by adopting a hermeneutic inquiry. Such approach is drawn from phenomenology (van Manen, 1990), in the Husserlian tradition, where the objective is exploring *what* it is like to exist as humans in the world in which the subjective reality of an individual gives meaning to the phenomenon under study (Husserl, 1970). In doing so, meanings are not merely projection of our understanding, they also 'constitute a genuine demand for narrativity' which renders the interpretive task of understanding meanings between the reader and the text to an 'open access that no single vision can conclude' (Ricoeur, 1991; cited in Moran & Mooney, 2002: 576). In reading this way, the two underpinning *currents* of imagination provide nuanced engagements to understanding student-migrant mobility in adopting the identity of a transnational profile. For the purpose of this paper, 4 participants are chosen as case studies because they have more vividly portrayed the *currents* in negotiating their transnational lifeworlds. The following reveals a brief profile of these 4 individuals and given pseudonyms:

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Ping, *from Shanghai, aged 28, was a married student who came to Australia, leaving behind her young son under the care of her husband and mother-in-law in China. Her motivation to venture out was partially because of she was struggling with being a working mother and saw education-migration as a way to salvage her estranged marriage, in pursuit of a better life for her son. Upon graduation with Bachelor in Accountancy, Ping worked in a large Chinese warehouse company in business dealings with expatriates on imports and exports products.*

Sunita*, from India, aged 24, came to Australia with her newly-wed husband. Sunita started working at the age of 18 in New Delhi during her undergraduate studies. Upon graduation with Bachelor in Languages and History, Sunita got promoted to work as a manager in a call centre. She later found another job working for a British-based private corporation and was given 3 months training in London. She later taught English in the British Council and then, with her husband, they decided to try migrate to Australia through further studies.*

Chong*, from Beijing, mid-20s, was single and lived in Beijing with his parents. His mother, a homemaker, had sisters who have migrated to Australia and Spain, was very supportive of his choice to study Teacher Education in Australia. Teaching was perceived as a career that provided an 'iron rice bowl'. Upon graduation with Bachelor in Languages, he worked as a tour guide for Swedish tourists touring in China. Like his aunts who were living overseas, he too yearned to live in a Western country where he could experience freedom of movement without visa restrictions from the China authorities.*

Haggai*, from Israel, aged 31, was single and worked as a lawyer for 3 years before deciding to study and migrate to Australia. During his time as a lawyer, he was posted to London and worked there for a year. Although he was envied among his peers as one who 'has it all', Haggai did not feel a sense of fulfilment. Having encountered a near-death incident while he was doing his national service in the army force, he felt the urge to change his environment and moved to a more peaceful place to live.*

Following the presented profiles of each of the 4 participants, I will next address the nuanced intercultural engagement of their experiences across the dual currents of imagination as '*Fitting-in*' and '*Looking*-out' and focusing on how they were impacted by their experiences of education-migration processes.

'Fitting-In': The Encounters with Mentor Teachers and Teaching Experiences in Local Schools

The notion 'Fitting-in' suggests something deeper than being 'overcomers' of life challenges. It also implies learning when faced with the old rules of interpreting the environment when the generated behaviours can no longer apply in a foreign milieu. Like all tertiary international students, the international pre-service teachers in this study are ultimately responsible for their own learning in becoming potential teacher-migrants. Yet, central to this learning and professional accomplishment of pre-service teachers is the one-to-one dynamic interaction between them and their mentor teachers, in particular on how their relationships with their mentor teachers shape their cultural constructions of power; and thereby adding another dimension of the mentor teacher's role in providing intercultural contact.

Even though Sunita's mentor teachers were so impressed with her level of English proficiency and professional attitude, she was still very conscious of how others, especially the students and staff, might think of her. This was what she said before her first teaching practicum:

> *'... so I think I might get along but I still don't know how people would respond to an Indian teacher teaching English. So that's one of my major worries right now' (15/12/09).*

Despite this apprehension, amongst all participants in this study, Sunita was probably one of the better adjusted pre-service teachers. Being affluent in English was undoubtedly one of the key factors that enabled her to negotiate her space and establish her bicultural identities in Australia, as a process of becoming part of the West. In a way, Sunita exemplified an 'integrated' (Berry, 2003) or a 'flexible' individual (Ong, 1999), akin to a balanced bicultural, whose language proficiency in Indian and English was equally strong and whose self-appropriated identity was congruent in both home and host societies. Through the process of fitting-in, Sunita gained professional validation from all her mentor teachers throughout her teaching practicum experience.

Yet, for Chong, his practicum was described like 'a roller coaster ride'; an experience that he was glad to have 'survived' (11/11/10). This 'ride' was similar to the U-shaped curve of culture shock that Oberg (1970) observed. However, Chong's greatest fear was being judged as 'at-risk'. Although he was provided the support he needed, he was asked to drop out halfway in his teaching practicum by the mentor teacher. This is because she believed Chong could benefit more if he enrolled in the English language course that she was teaching part-time in a private college. Chong did not feel he had any rights to disagree with her for the fear that he would be graded as 'at-risk'. As Chong explained:

> *She should judge from the outcomes. Does my language skill have an impact on the outcomes of learning that comes from the students? I don't think so. She said to me if I drop off now, I probably can attend her course and have a better report and she doesn't want any schools to reject me because of my language literacy. (11/11/10)*

Being assessed as 'at-risk' in his practicum has thrown him in a state of limbo. Chong explained his perception of his problem:

> *Probably I do love what this program provided me, the challenges ... they set up high expectations and pushed me to learn more [pause]... But for me right now, is to gain Permanent Residency. [Pause]... I needed to pay extra for the extended time. … I had to explain to the immigration why I have to drop off from the uni to take up another course and then to take up uni again. I don't think immigration could give me extra one and half year visa … That would get me into trouble all the time but I couldn't tell my mentor teacher about those things. (11/11/10)*

The fear of failing his teaching practicum might in turn also cost him a heavy price: missing a chance to apply for permanent residency. Such fear has hampered the growth in his own individuality and identity as a questioning learner. Chong's case highlighted a moral dimension in the relationships between pre-service teachers and mentor teachers, particularly when his mentor teacher was threatening to fail him if he did not participate in her private English course. '*Fitting-in'* in Chong's case is about 'making pragmatic responses, making the best of given (often bad) situations … in limited historical conjunctures' (Clifford, 1997: 366) as illustrated in Chong's context of his sojourn in Australia.

Haggai too had difficulties relating with his mentor teacher in an open and safe way. Yet, unlike Chong who claimed to have minimal contact with his mentor teacher, Haggai struggled with the manner in which the feedback was given to him. Perhaps this was how Haggai's mentor teacher was trying to show her authority as an experienced teacher in supervising Haggai. While Haggai did not only illustrate his independence and confidence in teaching Mathematics, his strong self-confidence made his mentor teacher perceived that he was refusing to take his advice which caused her to feel uneasy. This was how Haggai interpreted his mentor teacher's actions:

> *You know [pause]... the way she gives me the paper like this [threw a piece of paper to me], where were her manners? ... She is cold like ice. And I was shocked myself you know … I was reading very thoroughly her remarks. She wrote a whole page A4 you know (he laughed). But there was nothing about knowledge, being effective and no direction given. All the things that she was mentioning were technical stuff which were non-essential. (09/02/10)*

Despite the communication struggles with his mentor teacher, Haggi's professional identity in becoming a Mathematics teacher continued to be strengthened further. In Haggai's eyes, it did not matter even if the Mathematic software he created became the source of tension between him and his mentor teacher. As he claimed:

> *I saw my creation [pause]... And I saw how it works with the students. This was exactly what I was thinking when I was a student here. I was thinking 'Look I have to do things differently', you know. (09/02/10)*

Like Chong, Haggai too felt that his mentor teacher has failed to see how his teaching style was enhancing greater interest in Mathematics amongst the students. Despite this, Haggai was making a distinction between positively and negatively toned feedback from his mentor teacher even though he felt he was doing well as a pre-service teacher.

However, given similar situation, Sunita would approach her mentor teacher differently from Haggai. For Sunita, she understood that beyond than just being good and competent at what she was doing, she had to make sure she was able to perform up to the mark expected by her mentor teachers. It was imperative for her to know who her mentor teacher was first and what expectations the mentor teacher had of her, as a pre-service teacher. Perhaps, such approach could be due to gender and cultural issues which will be elaborated in the next section. Nevertheless, Sunita's strategy was a good example for all pre-service teachers.

Like her, they too need to be upfront with their mentor teachers and take the risk of being vulnerable by stressing that they are open to get feedback from their mentor teachers during the practicum. Sunita explained how she did it:

> *The mentor teacher gave me an option and asked what do I want to teach and I said maybe I wanted to do a film because I have never taught a film. I wanted to teach and see how I go. My mentor teacher appreciated that. (28/07/10)*

Her readiness to attempt different teaching strategies to suit her mentor teacher's expectations reflected not only Sunita's confidence but also her intercultural competence in working with her supervisor. Sunita has made a deliberate choice to reveal which side of her she wanted others to see when confronted with an unfamiliar intercultural milieu. For instance, when she was teaching her students, Sunita described:

> *Yes, every minute during my practicum, every day I was aware that I had to put myself up in such a way that no one [no student] thinks that "oh she is just an international student" (25/11/10).*

Yet, in front of her mentor teachers, she gave another facade, by informing her mentor teacher that she's not local:

> *… I went to her … and I said, Jessica … [pause]... I'm not sure if you do realise but I'm not from Australia, I haven't been born and bred here, I've been here only for like two and a half years and I don't know everything about how a school works, so if … there is something that I'm not doing … as a student teacher should do, just please let me know. And then she started asking me ... So, I think that really helped our relationship because … I was honest ... (28/07/10)*

In order to do well in her practicum, she found a way to understand how to interact and behave with those who were of authority in schools and those of whom she had authority over. Hence, her strategy to be seen differently in the eyes of her students and staff could be her way of coping with blending the cultural gaps in accepting and granting 'power'. In this way, Sunita was also allowing her mentor teacher to 'own' her progress and eventual success.

In comparison, although Haggai knew that mentor teachers play an important role in helping international pre-service teachers to learn how to fit in the local teaching environment, he soon realised his identity as an 'international' pre-service teacher could be a disadvantage. Like Chong, Haggai felt the immense power that his mentor teacher had over his precarious situation:

> *'You can't do what you want. Since there is a mentor teacher who holds you within their report, they're writing your report. You have to be the one who is flexible.' (09/02/2010).*

For the international pre-service teachers becoming migrants, mentor teachers in their sojourn are significantly more than just 'gatekeepers' of the teaching occupation (Peeler & Jane, 2005); they are also the 'gatekeepers' of them becoming a transnational in the host country. Any report that the participants receive from their mentor teachers would have greater implications: it could either make or break their hopes to become Australian residents. Such 'complicated entanglement' resonates with Ang's (2001) intellectual life. To her, all migrants—including 'student-migrants'—ultimately have to 'forge an accommodation with where they find themselves relocated, and to reconcile as a minority and acting upon it' (pg. 13).

Haggai's strong perception of his own identity as an 'international'—or 'non-Australia'—pre-service teacher was also part of Ping's lived reality. Ping seemed to be more pre-occupied with learning how to teach in Australia rather than taking up the role as a qualified teacher. She kept referring to the importance of what the 'brochure' said about the boundaries of being a pre-service teacher:

> *As pre-service teachers we have to follow the rules according to the brochure from the university …' (16/01/2011).*

Being pragmatic and knowing what her main goal was, teaching in Ping's eyes was regarded as:

> *'[t]eaching in any place is still a teacher. It is just a job.' (16/01/2011).*

To her, learning how to fit-in was seen as complying with her mentor teachers and making conscious comparison between how learning was delivered in China and Australia. In the following, she used an analogy in describing what learning in China was like:

> *Just like a plate of food, I give them the plate and tell them this is what you are going to learn about, I don't care how you are going to learn (21/01/11)*

Ping continued to use similar analogy to describe how learning was expected to be delivered in Australia:

> *Now, I need to put into pieces. If they need a spoon to feed themselves, I will give them a spoon; if they prefer chopsticks, I will give them chopsticks. I need to find what their physical and nutritional conditions they are in first. I always need to learn more about their nutritional needs. It is quite easy to be a teacher in China actually. (21/01/11)*

Despite the difficulties involved in negotiating the cultural differences in learning and teaching, Ping came to value some positive aspects of Australian education as it fits her imagined concept of Western liberal education. This new understanding was crucial in her process of 'fitting-in' even though her ultimate goal of obtaining the teaching qualification was to use it to apply for permanent residency in Australia. As she explained:

> *The more I know about Australian education, [the more] I respect the system. They [the system] respect students as humans. … Also, if students fail in one subject, the teachers will try their best to help them pass. In the Chinese system, you have to be in the top 10, not all the students can be [pause]... it is always about ranking, not about how much they really learn. (21/01/11)*

Thus, the construction of an Australian teacher for international pre-service teachers has two rather distinct components. One is derived from abstract theories and concepts learnt in the university. The other is built from experiential learning during the teaching practica. Ping's previous experience as a student in China has only taught her how to eat the fish on her plate. Yet her learning experience in Australia, as a pre-service teacher, has taught her the importance of knowing how to fish for herself so that her future students can also fish on their own.

More importantly, this process of change has equipped her to live and survive in the host culture. Such process, I argue, is part of Appadurai's (1996) view on 'imagination of fantasy'. This is because Ping has perceived that her newly appropriated identity as being more valued in Australia rather than China. Ping's process of looking back where she came from and then looking out to understand how the

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Australian education system works, has allowed her to negotiate her own identity within the intercultural space, which is an example of the process of professional identity construction:

> *My friends [in China] do not have a specific understanding of Australia. So going to America or Canada or Australia makes no difference to them… They can't understand … [I] speak Chinese, how can [I] be teaching subjects in English in Australia? I understand their attitude. In China, you eat rice every day. (21/01/2011)*

The next section provides another angle to examine how the *current* of 'looking-out' shapes the ways the participants search for 'freedom' and 'security'. The aim is to search for meaning in what helps them to be open to experience change and sometimes, difference. In so doing, a complementary angle to understanding and interpreting the theoretical perception of their individual imagination of becoming a migrant in the host country is provided.

Looking-Out: Ideas of Freedom and Security

'Looking-out' is portrayed as part of a complicated tension between living in 'here/there' and 'roots/routes', comprising of their entangled hopes and anxieties to improve the possibilities of their own future. These complications, I argue, have an impact on their sense of professional and transnational identities formation processes as they negotiate their transnational lifeworlds. An important area in which the notion of 'looking-out' is negotiated, constructed and judged is that of 'freedom' and 'security'. Several of the participant pre-service teachers observed that their choice to study and eventually to live in Australia is a move towards living in 'freedom' and 'security'. Yet, for each of them, the terms 'freedom' and 'security' represent different issues and meanings.

In the case of Chong and Ping, this 'freedom' signified the opportunity to travel freely anywhere in the world, without any constraints from their home country. For them, getting a permanent residency status and even an Australian citizenship status through Teacher Education studies was the eventual goal of being free to be in the West. However, it remains unclear if they are able to fulfil their imagined hopes and dreams. For Chong, the freedom from Chinese autocratic rule was particularly important, given that his Chinese citizenship cost him an opportunity to gain employment in Sweden, as Chong explained:

> *I almost got the job. … They asked me if I can go to USA for a week for work meeting. … But as a Chinese passport holder, this is really difficult for me. … because I may have to wait for months or at least two weeks. … for a visa all the time if I need to fly to USA often. So I think if I got the Australian Permanent Residency [pause] ... I can use that passport to travel all over the world. (07/01/2010)*

By coming to Australia, Chong was seeking freedom in mobility to work, particularly in a western culture. A culture in which, over the years, he has grown to identify as part of his evolving self. The permanent residency status would represent a ticket for him to obtain some form of stability from his previous career and home country. Chong and Ping did not choose to do teacher education out of a 'vacuum'.

For Ping, on the other hand, her motivation to embark on 'student-migrant' pathway through Australian teacher education came largely from her personal struggle in meeting both increasingly competitive work demands and family commitments. By changing her job environment might provide Ping a sense of relief from her motherly 'guilt', as Ping commented:

> *I rarely have any time [for my son]. Sometimes I left home early morning six o clock, went to factory to check the goods. Then I went home around 8 [at night] …. [Then] I need to continue to work … some of my clients are from Europe, we might start work from 2pm in China but that was morning in Europe. In most of the times, I have to work until 12 o'clock at night. … [pause]... and I felt so guilty. (20/04/2010)*

Additionally, Ping's notion of 'freedom' was to break free from being framed by Confucius concepts of a woman's role in a society. This was significant for Ping, especially when she was an urbanised working young mother. Ping explained:

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> *I struggle against Confucian thinking. Over the years, people put their own definitions into the Confucian theories. Nowadays, Confucian thinking talks about women should listen to their husbands when they are alive and when they die, they should listen to themselves. ... If this theory goes to a higher level, not everyone can reach. Everything has two sides and there is consequence. (21/01/2011)*

Thus, Ping chose to cross borders in search of living in a culture that would validate her self-worth and identity as a woman. If not, she would be:

> *'… dying ... physically and mentally... I told my husband maybe when I get Australian Permanent Residency, we can give it [their marriage] a try but if it still doesn't work, we can still take care of our son and be together but maybe not in marriage' (15/12/2009).*

Sunita too shared similar internal tensions as Ping. Unlike Ping, Sunita was not trying to break away from her family. Instead, ever since her teenage years, Sunita was trying to escape from the pressure in maintaining the cultural heritage view of how she should look and behave as an Indian woman. Hence, a strong motivation for her to leave India was to find a 'third' space where she could be free to express her own sexual individuality and identity. Sunita further explained:

> *When I was in India, I was a big misfit. I thought differently about everything. In India, virginity is a valued thing and I never believed in that. I believe that sexuality is what you are too. I think that was a major power for me having your own sexuality, trying to make decisions on my own without allowing others to make decisions about me. … However even though I might say I don't care what people think, I think I really do. (25/11/2010)*

In fact, because Sunita's own evolving sexuality was very much part of her identity, it became more problematic for her when she also cared about what others thought of her, resulting in an internal conflict of being an Indian woman. Like Ping, she did not feel her own ethnic heritage and culture should measure her worth as a woman. Hence, to a large degree, Ping and Sunita, demonstrated a unique and differentiated sense of agency to pursue 'freedom' in the face of unfavourable situations back home.

Although Haggai, Sunita, Chong and Ping had no background teaching experience in their home countries, they perceived teaching as a more secure job. Such sense of security was not necessarily about financial security, or long term stability, in being able to afford their stay in Australia. More importantly, their sense of 'security' was tied closely to their search for a pathway to obtain permanent residency status which would also allow them to fulfil their aspirations for 'freedom' and the desire to maintain their previous social standing back home. Because of this, they have chosen to become teachers rather than taking on courses that they may be more suited and qualified to do in Australia. While the main drive was obtaining residency status in Australia, much was unclear to how they could achieve the goal. Such notion of 'security' in their future career trajectory was perceived differently for each of the participants. For example, to Haggai, it was about feeling satisfied and at ease about one's work; to Sunita and Chong, it was about getting some form of stability that will allow them to organise and plan for their future; and to Ping, it was simply having another job option in Australia. All these perceived differences are directly influenced by their varying degrees of chances to obtain Australian residency. For example, Sunita perceived her choice to become a teacher in these terms:

> *... one of the reasons why I want to complete my courses was to get Permanent Residency but at the end of it, I also want to teach. So this is not just serving one purpose for me and wasn't just making me permanent in Australia but it was also making me into the line of education. The field that I have been good at and I enjoyed doing. (15/12/2009)*

Being fluent and proficient in English, and having been a trainer cum manager in a New Delhi call centre, does have a positive effect on Sunita's readiness and confidence in becoming a teacher in Australian local schools. Choosing to become a teacher was also a practical and strategic option for Ping, Chong and Haggai. However, it did not mean that their transitional career move was as natural and seamless as Sunita's. For example, although Chong and Ping desired to graduate and qualify as teachers, Ping's desire to choose teaching as her next career step dwindled. Ping elaborated:

> *… when I compare teaching with my previous work, doing business, teaching is a little bit boring. Like I can talk to people working in the factories or check the samples I actually*

> *build a relationship with them and …. But, for teaching, from the time I step into the school and the time I leave, I have to show people I am a teacher. It's kind of a pressure on me. (21/01/2011)*

What Ping seemed to be rejecting was the complex identity and problematic performance of teaching, and not that teaching was 'boring'—even though this was how she seemed to frame it. Having to perform as a teacher did not sit right with her set of business skills and experience. However, this did not mean that Ping's engagement in the teaching course was all useless to her, as she explained:

> *I may go to Sydney to get a job in importing and exporting account; at the same time, I will also look for work as a teacher. Teaching is an additional form of work I can do it as another option. I think teaching will be part of my life. (21/01/2011)*

As mentioned before, the drive for Ping to 'look-out' to live in Australia as a permanent resident is not solely for herself but more so for her son. Yet, not everyone in Ping's life understood her rationale. As Ping explained:

> *It is hard for [my friends] to understand because they know it is hard for me. It's like you eat rice every day in China. All of a sudden, from today, I decide to only eat meat. I may be suffering from learning the language [English] but it is not enough to kill. There is nothing to regret. I live [for] my son but I also have to live for myself. (21/01//2011)*

For Haggai, the pursuit of a sense of security signified '*starting a new life'* and having the sense of being '*in the right place'* and feeling that he was '*doing the right thing ... [because] that's the horizon'* (Haggai, 08/05/2009). Such pursuit was understandable for Haggai since he encountered a near-death incident when serving as a reservist in the Israeli army. To Haggai, this '*horizon'* went further than just wanting to become a qualified teacher. It included giving himself a new purpose and direction of life.

Although Haggai struggled with his identity as an Israeli lawyer, he did not struggle with his own heritage or his cultural roots in Judaism, nor did he reject the social and cultural aspects of living in Australia. To him, the '*laid back, quiet'* Australian lifestyle was the '*benchmark of living'* a fulfilling life (08/05/2009). It was this perception of what it means to have quality of life in Australia that drove Haggai to look-out to:

> *'… get assimilated here [in Australia] … to get work …not as an international student … but to be part of … to be inside … to grow with them and influence them.' (08/05/2009).*

The experiences of 'looking-out' not only affected how the participants view Australia, they have also problematised the process of becoming transnationals. Each individual's negotiated transnational identities was impacted by their perceptions on the notions of 'freedom' and 'security': how each was interpreted and lived differently. One important theme was how gender, particularly the constructions of feminine identity in the context of 'freedom' and 'security', impacted on the shifting identities of Sunita and Ping. For them, what was strikingly clear was that 'gender' and not 'sexuality' was a key issue. To others, the meaning of 'freedom' and 'security' was literally taken to mean to break free from the socio-cultural and political regimental control of their home country and family. Regardless of their motivations, to a large extent, their drive to study in Australia was also compounded by their sense of agency to change their own lifeworlds (Dahlberg et al. 2001).

Conclusion

In this paper, based on a hermeneutic phenomenological study, two broad *currents* that shape the imaginations of student-migrants for migration through teacher education studies are identified. Each *current* characterises contemporary student-migrant mobility in Australia as the work of imagination for mobility. The first *current* pertains to the contents and workings of cultural constructions of power played out in the practicum sites as forms of '*Fitting-In'*. In a sense, the international pre-service teacher-migrants are required to understand the differences in the cultures of learning (Jin & Cortazzi, 1998 & 2006) and translate that understanding to how their subjects should be taught in Australian schools. For the participants, they have found this process of translating and transferring what they

have learnt into classroom teaching, a self-transforming process. Although this *current* of '*fitting-in'* is complicated by cultural, linguistic and expectation variances, such *current* still exerts significant influences on the cultural-symbolic dimensions of the intercultural adaptations of international pre-service teacher-migrants, its effects on their imagination of becoming transnationals are arguably on the wane as they continue to interact with the second *current*.

The second *current* of '*Looking-Out'* is another pivotal feature of the education-migration nexus. It produces a pragmatic tenacity towards increasing ambivalence of their sojourn in Australia and immediate future. Regardless of the uncertainties, the *current* of '*Looking-Out'* is unlikely to abate as long as both the work of social imagination in migration regard education as an instrumental pathway to maintaining balance between their idea of freedom and security which was not experienced in their home country. This paper thus argues that in rendering these two *currents* as dimensions of their imagination of education-migration nexus, nuanced engagements to understanding pre-service teacher-mobility, as a subset of student-migrants, in adopting the identity of a transnational profile are provided. While there has been significant amount of literature on reforming and repositioning Australia's international education-migration nexus in meeting the skills shortage in labour market (Birrell et al., 2007), in adjusting university courses to the encompassing changes (Gribble & Blackmore, 2012), and in understanding the 'student-migrants' themselves (Robertson & Runganaikaloo, 2014). Further research is still needed to investigate how student-migrants move from the state of limbo in the face of uncertainty into a more complex shifting membership between routes/roots (Clifford, 1997) and here/there (Gilroy, 1993).

As I have alluded at various places in this paper, the pre-service teachers-migrants' narratives do not only portray their desires for flexibility in citizenship (Ong, 1991) and future possibility of employment outcomes (Hawthorne, 2010), their portrayals are also shaped by their imaginations of accessing to social, cultural, symbolic security and freedom of living in the 'West'. Inspired by Said (2001), the notion of the 'West' is not only viewed as a historical space (Venn, 2000) for understanding how 'all human activity that takes place in history, of history'; it is also a conceptual space to understanding how to 'connect things with each other – different cultures, different peoples, different historical periods' (Said, 2001: 143). In reading this way, in order to understand how the work of 'imagination' is becoming a form of social practice impacting human mobility through international education-migration nexus (Appadurai, 1996), it also requires an act of interpretation to grasp how socio-cultural reality within the nexus is made and remade for others. This paper has shown how Australian education-migration does not only provide a context to understand the fluctuating anxieties and certainties of student-migrants, such nexus has also created a conceptual space to analyse and interpret the lived experiences of those affected by their strong desire for migration through education.

Finally, following Appadurai (1996), this paper has also attempted to uncover the cultural logics of the agency of individual student-migrant. Although this has been highlighted in Robertson & Runganaikaloo's (2014) study in understanding how student-migrants have navigated the labour market and reframed their lives which were constantly in limbo; much is still unknown on how their desires for mobility are enabling them to adapt to the social, cultural and institutional practices in university, local school communities and beyond. While the findings in this paper cannot lend themselves to be generalizable, it has shown how individual pre-service teacher-migrant can find ways to respond positively to the contested site of intercultural engagement that teacher education studies demand. Such findings are significant because, despite their state of vulnerabilities, there is potential for university courses that offer practicum placements—such as teacher education—to strengthen the capacities of transnational subjects who embody specific forms of *fitting-in* and *looking-out*. Their experiences of agency and identity-formation, within the framework of imagination, thus provide some insight into how teacher education can be a generative and transformative site for student-migrants in negotiating their transnational lifeworlds.

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