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# CONSTRAINTS AND CONCERNS OF TEACHING TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY IN A MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT

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## ABSTRACT

*As an outcome of the author's ongoing PhD research, this paper describes how a phenomenological research method was employed to gather meaningful, essential understanding of the lived experiences of tourism and hospitality academics in the multicultural classroom. Twenty-seven lecturers, across seven campuses of two Australian schools teaching tourism and hospitality, were interviewed to ascertain what experiences the lecturers thought were of importance in the teaching of tourism and hospitality, in a multicultural context. Three main areas outline the scope: the experiences surrounding the self, surrounding the multicultural other, and surrounding the environment. In this paper the form and value of this type of interpretive phenomenological method is explained, as it explores the darker side of lecturers' experiences: the constraints (those influences which restrict the lecturer in carrying out teaching in an optimal manner), and their concerns (the emotional cares which are experienced as negative). The concerns and constraints experienced by these lecturers show that these lecturers experience an essential sense of 'lostness' in each of the three areas as they can feel professionally and personally lost, and at a loss, in each of these areas.*

Key words: tourism education, phenomenology, multiculturalism

## INTRODUCTION

At present, approximately 200,000 international students study in Australian institutions, contributing over AUD\$4.2 billion to the Australian economy annually. Future prognoses indicate that the global demand for international higher education is set to grow enormously: over the last 12 months the number of international students enrolled in Australian universities increased by 12.5 per cent (IDP Global update, 2004), and demand for Australian education is forecast to increase 9-fold from 1.8 million international students in 2000 to 7.2 million international students in 2025 (Böhm, Davis, Meares, & Pearce, 2002). As the global educational system becomes more geared to multicultural society, and a need to find funding beyond local students and research projects emerges, more pressure is being exerted on tertiary institutions to open their doors to foreign students. This has a significant impact on lecturers as increasing numbers of international students form part of the classroom, either onshore or offshore. The question arises as to how tourism and hospitality academics cope with this. The researcher's qualitative PhD research focuses on the lived experience of tourism and hospitality academics in the multicultural classroom. This paper explores the constraints and concerns expressed by 28 tourism, hospitality academics currently teaching at two schools of tourism, hospitality and marketing management at Australian universities.

## Literature

Cross-cultural (intercultural) theory offers insight into coping with a multicultural student body. Many of the established interculturalists take a dimensional approach to culture: that is, they map the different national cultures on various two-dimensional scales of opposites,

which allows one to compare and contrast one society to another. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) categorised cultures according to their place on six dimensions: relationship to environment; time; nature of people; activity; focus of responsibility; and concept of space. The well-known interculturalist Geert Hofstede divided cultures into five dimensions ranging from 'high' to 'low' on power distance; uncertainty avoidance; masculinity / femininity; individualism / collectivism and quantity / quality of life (Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 1997, 2001). Hall and Hall (Hall, 1989; 1987) developed a similar classification system whereby they ranked cultures according to their communicative behaviour on four dimensions: context; space; time; and information flow. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000; 1998) elaborated on these dimensions and divided national cultures according to their score on the following scales: rules versus relationships; groups versus individuals; specificity versus individuality; achievement versus ascription in according status; time orientation; relationship to nature.

However, an understanding of the varying dimensional approaches does not necessarily equip a lecturer with the capabilities or the competence to manage effectively in an international or multicultural context. As Gannon (2000) argues, "[t]hese dimensional approaches are an excellent starting point for understanding cultures and providing an overall perspective on cultural differences, but an individual will experience great difficulty in applying them to daily interactions". Research into the application of internationalisation and managing within an international context has largely focused on manufacturing industries (Aliber, 1970; Buckley & Casson, 1976; Caves, 1971; Dunning, 1989; Hymer, 1976, 1990; Vernon, 1974), while others, such as Aharoni (1990); Dunning (1989) ; and Hussain and Mirza (1997) have addressed the internationalisation of services. Alexander and Lockwood (Alexander, 1996); Nickson (1998); O'Farrell, Wood and Zheng (1998); Olsen (1999); and Roberts (1999) have focused on the hospitality industry internationalisation. Teaching in the multicultural classroom has been researched extensively, with a focus on meeting the learning needs of international students (e.g. Barron, 2004; Breitborde, 1993; Chan & Treacy, 1996; Kato, 2001), and the design of inclusive curricula (e.g. Cheng & Tam, 1997; Das, 2005; Haigh, 2002; Wood, Tapsall, & Soutar, 2005). Research into the experience of lecturers in the multicultural environments are often with the aim of quite prescriptive outcomes for 'good practice' and outline how "culturally responsive teachers" should behave (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

As can be seen, much previous research on human interaction in a multicultural setting focuses on improving cross-cultural management and education and leads to a plethora of well-meant how-to-manuals. Indeed, the author's previous in-depth study on teaching in the multicultural classroom led to just that: a series of teaching and learning seminars and articles aimed at proactively improving the lecturer's expertise and skills in teaching in the multicultural classroom, which generally were attended by those who were interested and positive about the matter in the first place. But what of the multicultural teaching experiences of the lecturers themselves? Ehrich (1997) argues that there is a need for understanding educators outside the confines of theoretical constructs and overarching frameworks, and utilises an interpretive phenomenological study which allows the educators' experiences to speak for themselves. Ehrich's findings indicate that there is a mismatch between current policy directions for professional development and the reality of the educators' experiences.

This study explores in depth the joys and benefits, as well as the constraints and concerns as experienced by lecturers teaching tourism and hospitality in an international context. This paper deals with only the concerns and constraints. The joys and benefits will be explored in a following paper.

## **METHODS**

## **Interpretive methodology**

Tribe (2001) suggests that there are three methodological approaches to a tourism curriculum, namely a scientific-positivist, an interpretive and a critical paradigm. With an interpretive paradigm, “the human aspect of research activity is realised, and interactions between the researcher and the researched world are brought to the foreground” (Tribe, 2001). This paradigm sits in contrast to the scientific-positivist paradigm, which, as Tribe critically reflects, has only a limited application because of a “lack of attention to meaning and values” (2001) which are so important in the light of tourism’s rapid growth and the ensuing sustainability issues. Within an interpretive curriculum paradigm, “[t]he extent of the tourism world and tourism aims are not predetermined or predefined. Rather, part of the interpretive method is to seek agreement and understanding of the tourism world and tourism purposes” (Tribe, 2001 p. 445). Although Tribe does not specifically argue for an interpretive approach when *researching* tourism and hospitality academics, the interpretive approach does allow the researcher to seek agreement and understanding of the increasingly international world of tourism and hospitality academics.

The researcher here steps back from searching for a prescriptive answer, and instead approaches the issue with the aim of better understanding the nature of interaction in a multicultural setting, and the impact of this upon the lecturer. The nature of research issues at stake here suggest that a humanistic / hermeneutic research philosophy (Gummeson, 1991) or a phenomenological philosophy is required (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, 2002), rather than a positivistic or scientific research philosophy (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

If you were interested in the dynamics of the encounter, in the behaviour at the incidents, in the way people make sense of such incidents, and the arguments they construct in interpreting them, the ‘just the facts’ approach would not be very illuminating. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1988)

## **Phenomenology**

Since the introduction of phenomenology as a philosophy in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by Husserl (1931) many variations and interpretations of phenomenological research have been developed. Indeed, it has since been defined as a philosophy, a paradigm, and a methodology (Patton, 1990). Phenomenologically oriented researchers study everyday events from within the life-world of the person experiencing them. “The aim is to determine what the experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” (Moustakas 1994). Phenomenologists aim to describe phenomena as they manifest themselves to the consciousness of the experiencer (Moran, 2000, original published in French in 1945). The phenomenon may be emotions, thoughts, or physical objects. This implies then that the researcher strives to “avoid all misconstructions and impositions placed on experience in advance” (Moran, 2000).

Phenomenology attempts more to describe than explain (Husserl, 1931; Merleau-Ponty, 2002), and attempts to recognise and understand the role of consciousness and perception in the achievement (*Leistung*) of knowledge. However, it is not a “wallowing” in subjectivity for its own sake. As Moran explains,

Indeed, the whole point of phenomenology is that we cannot split off the subjective domain from the domain of the natural world as scientific naturalism has done. Subjectivity must be understood as inextricably involved in the process of constituting objectivity (Moran, 2000).

And certainly, the psychology of perception has given rise to much solid scientific research over the years (e.g. Harvey, Orbuch, & Weber, 1992; Heider, 1944; Ross, Amabile, & Steinmetz, 1977; Shaver, 1983; Taylor & Fiske, 1975). Phenomenology, nevertheless, has been extensively criticised by positivists and members of the Vienna Circle, such as Schlick, Carnap, Ayer and Horkheimer. In France, the criticism of the assumption of the possibility of the full presence of the meaning in an intentional act by structuralists such as Althusser, Lévi-Strauss and Derrida eventually led to the collapse of phenomenology as a method. However, the enduring value of phenomenological method is the manner in which it has steadfastly protected the subjective view of experience as a necessary part of any full understanding of the nature of knowledge (Becker, 1992; Ehrich, 2003; Merleau-Ponty, 2002; Moran, 2000). Ehrich (1997; 2003) examines the role of phenomenology in educational research, and argues that it has made, and continues to make, significant and rich contributions to education.

There are nine 'stages' in the phenomenological method adopted here (Cox, 1998), the first three of which are attitudinal. The first stage is *performing epoché*: the subjective observer temporarily suspends his or her own personal and academic (and, one would assume, cultural) presuppositions about the nature of reality in order to appreciate the perspectives of the people under observation. In this study, the researcher stepped aside from her quite positive outlook on internationalisation as a "good" development in universities. Researchers are never entirely impartial (Ezzy, 2002), but this stage encourages the researcher to self-awareness on this front. The second stage is to *perform empathetic interpolation*: the observers endeavour to understand what it would be to experience the world in the way the others do. Personal judgements are suspended so that an empathetic attitude may be employed. Here, the researcher reached understanding of the interviewee's issues – irrespective of whether they mirrored the researcher's beliefs or not – by employing active listening (De Janasz, Dowd, & Schneider, 2004), a proactive form of listening which involves feedback and rephrasing to ensure understanding. The third stage in the attitudinal phase is *maintaining epoché*: Although the observer tries to enter into the experiences of the others, they do not adopt the actual beliefs of the others - it is not synonymous with 'converting' to the other's value and belief system. The observer continues to suspend the judgements about the truth or reality of what is actually occurring. At the same time it is important that the observer is always aware that he or she is looking through culturally tinted glasses. As Hegel writes in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History; Introduction: Reason in History*,

In everything that is supposed to be scientific, reason must be awake and reflection applied. To him who looks at the world rationally the world looks rationally back; the two exist in a reciprocal relationship (Hegel, 1840, translated in Stern, 2001)

The next three stages are descriptive: *describing the phenomena, naming the phenomena, and describing interrelationships and processes*. The final three stages are analytical and entail interpretation. *Constructing the paradigmatic model* is the next step: here, the paradigmatic model is inspired by Leiper's (Leiper, 1979, 2004) whole systems model: the self, the intercultural other and the surrounding academic and physical environment (see fig.1, below). The second last stage, *the eidetic intuition*, is interesting as it aims to see into (intuit) the meaning, to discover the essences (eidos) of human experience. It is here that essential themes are explored (for traditionally in phenomenological research, there may be a number of 'essences' that are discovered). This comes quite close to Clifford Geertz's (1973: 3) 'Thick Description':

The concept of culture I espouse .... is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.

The final stage is to *test the intuition*, for example by seeking open feedback, such as the presentation of findings.

### **Interview method**

The interviews were introduced to the participants – most of them experienced researchers themselves - as being ‘semi structured’, although this is a very vague term. Semi-structured interviews are part of the biographic-narrative interview method (BNIM) (Wengraf, 2001). In the case of the interviews with the lecturers, narratives were sought as much as possible – if possible, by a single question (SQUIN) (Wengraf, 2001) to address the phenomenological issue of epoche. However, at times this simply did not work: some participants, unsure of their footing, perhaps, were less forthcoming and needed a more structured interaction. In those cases, the method used was, more specifically, a lightly-structured depth interview (LSDI) which allows the interviewee the freedom to produce a narrative of their choosing within the general outline of the theme (Wengraf, 2001). Interestingly, when the SQUIN method did work, the interview ‘took off’, and the researcher was left feeling quite disempowered, and as if ‘control’ of the interview had been lost. Nonetheless, upon analysis, these interviews delivered much rich material.

Kvale (1996) suggests that interviews can be seen in two ways. On the one hand, they can be viewed as a neutral process, whereby objective truths are sought (identified) with the aim of ‘capturing’ the reality of the ‘subjects’ being explored. The researcher searches for facts to be quantified (what Kvale terms “essential nuggets of meaning”). On the other hand the researcher can take an interpretive perspective. The interview, then, is based on the interaction between the researcher and participant, and it is their interaction, which creates a complex picture, shaped by an inter-exchange of views. In this way, according to Kvale, the research matter is no longer objective data to be quantified, but “meaningful relations to be interpreted”. However, the process of interpretation is extremely important and not simply a matter of reading over the text to ‘analyse’ the information in the manner of a media reporter. True, interviews generate information from which we make inferences. However, these inferences can be made on several levels. According to Wengraf, (2001) there are three types of knowledge we can infer from an analysis of an interview: discourse, objective referents, and subjectivity.

The discourse level is the mode of talk spontaneously chosen by the subject. According to Chomsky and Foucault, the deep structure generates the ‘surface performance’ and determines what can and what can't be said. This is like a pattern of rules that creates patterned productions of things likely to be said (‘sayables’) and things unlikely or impossible to be said (‘unsayables’) within the particular ‘regime of discourse’. This is strongly influenced by the footing (Goffman, 1981 [1979]) tacitly negotiated between the researcher as a ‘self’ and the interviewee (e.g. myself as a researcher, myself as a woman, myself as perceived higher or lower in the status / order), and by constraints of context: as the interviews are recorded and the interviewee knows that the results will be quoted; they may be unwilling or unable to say things which reflect badly on their own performance, on their own attitudes, or openly criticise the university, the school, their colleagues or the students.

The objective referent is the set of ‘realities’ that are referred to in the talk (hence the word ‘referent’), or the information that can be gleaned through the talk, and exclude the ‘subjectivity’ of the individual informant. These objective referents can be broadly called ‘topics’ and are akin to the ‘objective facts’. From the interviews knowledge can be inferred, for example, as to who taught what, and in which countries and to how many students; what teaching strategies were employed, and so on.

The third type of knowledge that can be gained from an interview is the ‘subjectivity’ level. In a phenomenological study the subjectivity (and the changing subjectivities) of the

interviewee is the key area of interest, as the study is concerned about the lived experiences of the lecturers as unique people in unique situations (Wengraf, 2001).

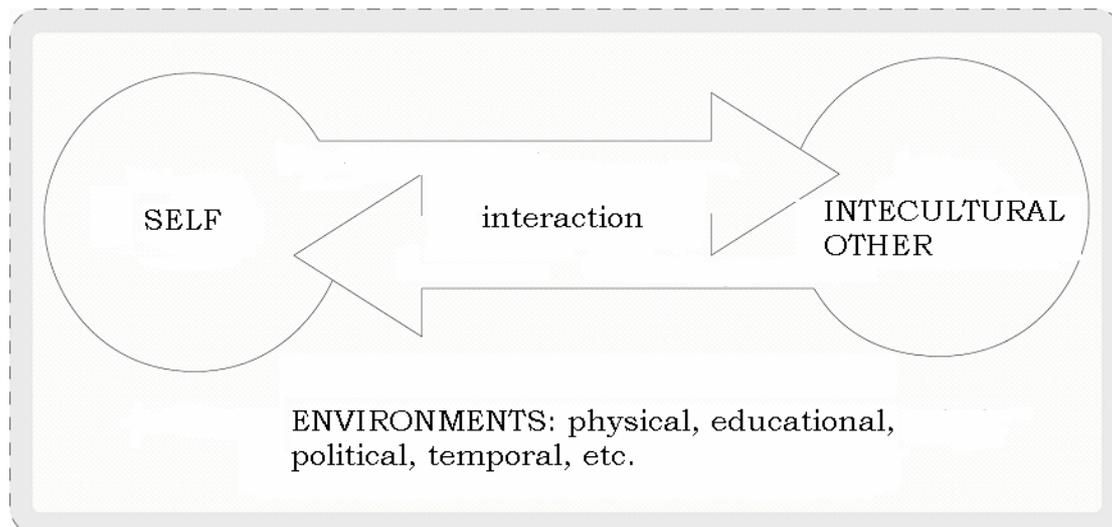
### **Mind mapping as a data analysis tool**

To analyse these three types of knowledge mind mapping was used as a data analysis tool. In the Western world, “thinking shows a decided bias toward the use of linear thought patterns when processing information, perhaps due to a high regard for Newtonian perceptions of the universe” (Mento, Martinelli, & Jones, 1999). According to De Bono, (1990), linear thinking is essentially selective in that “... one selects the most promising approach to a problem, the best way of looking at a situation. With lateral thinking one generates as many alternative approaches as one can”. In the case of concept mapping or mind mapping, the logic structures employed are more generative than linear, and in this way, more suited to interpretive methodologies, as it allows for a more inductive approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 1988; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Ticehurst & Veal, 1999; Wengraf, 2001). What is more, “as interpretation is inherent to all human understanding of the world, specific aspects of interpretation appear in all types of research, although it is most often perceived to be typical of qualitative approaches” (Gummesson, 2003). In this vein, then, mind mapping or concept mapping can aid all types of researchers. For a phenomenological study, mind mapping is a particularly valuable tool as it allows for the use of free imagination, intuition and reflection to enable the researcher to discover the essence of experience (Ehrlich, 2003). The results for this particular essence can be viewed in fig. 2, below.

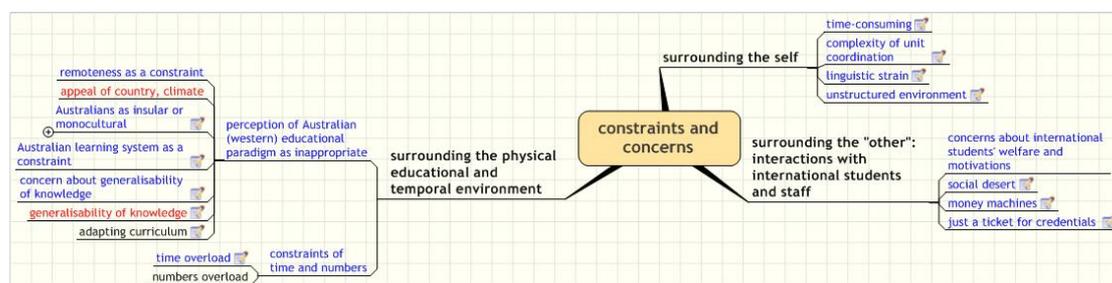
### **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS; CONSTRAINTS AND CONCERNS**

Constraints are those factors (real but perhaps also perceived) that restrict the lecturer in carrying out the art of teaching in an optimal manner; the limitation of possibilities. Goldratt’s theory of constraints (Goldratt & Cox, 2005; Schragenheim, 1999) maintains, quite sensibly, that any real-world system must contain at least one constraint, otherwise its performance would be infinite – which would clearly be an impossibility. However, it maintains that a successful system needs to have very few constraints, otherwise it would be unstable and cease to exist. Linked to constraints, but not always necessarily directly resulting from these, are concerns about teaching in the multicultural context. Concerns are on the more emotional side of the teaching - that which causes anxiety or worry, insecurity or tension.

The paradigmatic model chosen for, as described above, is a model inspired by Leiper’s systems model (Leiper, 1979, 2004) and based on basic communication theory of sender – message - receiver. In this model, the issue of teaching in the multicultural setting is explored in three ‘areas’: surrounding the self; surrounding interactions with international students and staff (the intercultural “*other*”) and surrounding the physical and educational *environment* (see Fig. 1). Within the larger study, there appear many instances of joy and positive experiences, but in this paper only the constraints and concerns in each of these three areas are explored.



**Figure 1: paradigmatic model**



**Figure 2: concerns and constraints: exploring the essential experiences**

### Constraints and concerns surrounding the self

Increased workload, pressure, sense of not knowing what is happening and being thrown in “the deep end” are common concerns among the interviewees. Words such as ‘floundering’, ‘lost’, ‘don’t know anything’, ‘it was tough’, ‘it’s complex’, ‘difficult’ ‘it’s a strain’ are frequent. The university structure itself contributes to this sense of ‘lostness’ due to the somewhat unstructured environment:

*... when you come here you’re really sort of floundering for a little while about as to what exactly you should be doing, how you should be doing it, ...*

...

*In the beginning of teaching here it was difficult, because you didn’t know exactly what you were supposed to do, you didn’t exactly know what your job was, you didn’t exactly know who you were accountable to*

The very concept of what constitutes ‘international’ is debatable when dealing with lecturers who themselves are from other cultures than ‘from here’; and of course ‘here’ is variable, too, depending on where one is at a given moment. Multicultural teaching in any setting can be difficult, because it involves interaction with a different culture. This international (Asian) lecturer recounts the ‘tough’ experience of teaching different international students for the first time. The lecturer was placed before a group of 176 students from varying cultural backgrounds in the Middle East, none of which were from the same country as the lecturer.

*And that was global village in real sense, where I had my first experience of teaching and it was pretty tough, it was tough ... Because... basically I have never been*

*exposed to this kind of environment, and I had to cater to that wide audience, and here it was ... Like in [the lecturer's home country] for example there was only one kind of student and I knew their learning styles, what are they expecting, but in this case, where you don't know anything about the students' background, it is difficult. And that is what I faced at that time.*

International, multicultural team management - the issue of coordinating units across countries, is a factor which compounds lecturers' sense of uncertainty. Lecturers may not have the experience, resources, or support, to effectively manage multicultural teams of tutors or offshore lecturers. It is viewed as complex:

*The role of unit coordinators is becoming more complex, and I think the unit coordinators' responsibilities are becoming a little bit heavier with this. I don't think that's recognised, of course, but I do think it's there. I think we just assume as it comes along.*

The following lecturer is discussing challenges in coordinating the teaching of multicultural groups in multiple (onshore and offshore) locations:

*And then, this semester, it's been the first time I've had a subject that I was coordinating that was being delivered here and at two offshore locations, so you know, and the logistics of that... !! [lecturer puffs cheeks out, sighs, and throws hands in the air] ... and the other dimension of it, not just the experiences of the students, but also with the local lecturers, who were involved, because suddenly that becomes a much more complex thing. ...and yet you're trying to sort of coordinate a subject overall, and also ensure some sort of equity and, and try and have some input problem, they come from very different backgrounds.*

And for all that travel is appealing to many tourism and hospitality lecturers, the prospect of offshore teaching is fraught with uncertainty and a sense that the lecturer's whole self will be 'turned on its head'

*I'm teaching in Australia because I like to teach units here, because I like to educate our Australian kids or students whatever cultural background they have, I have no desire to go and teach in Hong Kong or in China or, you know, places like that, because I feel my whole history, my whole background, my whole education will be turned on its head and I don't know if I would be open to that challenge*

Disempowerment in the face of a perceived globalisation is an issue, below. The following lecturer feels that their voice is not heard, and that leads to a sad sense of loss of control and detracts from – or interferes with – this lecturer's love of diversity in education, rendering the lecturer quite upset:

*For me this ties in with the whole globalisation of education at the moment..... I love having people from other cultures, but um, when the power is taken away from you as a teacher, that they say, "these are going to be your students" whether they are all from this particular culture or that country or whatever it might be. ... So I think while it can be empowering and it's really interesting to bring in other cultural perspectives ...it depends where that choice has come from: is it students on exchange and really wanting to do tourism or (lecturer's other main subject) studies, or is it "we need to go source a market from China so that we can make money"?... so to me it comes back to management and power and what power I have as a lecturer to have a say in what's happening?*

The personal sense of strain is obvious in some cases, and can appear even on a linguistic level. Language a sense of self are irretrievably connected, so it comes as no surprise that the language issue contributes to the sense of pressure the lecturer feels. What speaks clearly here is that this lecturer felt as if the deficiency is therefore in the teaching, and feels that their 'work is gone':

*I mean, it's a strain. ... I mean teaching is essentially a communicative activity, and language, words are the main, are the principal vehicle for communicating, and if you're communicating to somebody to whom the language you're speaking isn't their first language, isn't the language that many of them are really comfortable with; it's very difficult. It's very difficult. Because, as the teacher, you're the one who feels the deficiency is on your part. The deficiency is in the teaching, really. That's how you feel. Because they've come to your class and yet you're trying to teach them, but you're using a language that isn't their preferred language.*

*You're trying to do two things at once, you're trying to... You are, and even if you're not trying to teach them English, they are trying to learn English at the same time at the same time as you're trying to teach them the subject matter that you're trying to teach about; so you're carrying two businesses, with the same .. with the same venture. It's hard for them, and its hard for you, and since there's lots of them and there is only one of you, and you feel, you know, feel that your work's gone.*

The possibility of more time pressure placed upon the lecturers is in some cases not appealing:

*... and an other approach that some of our colleagues would follow and are already following, is to personally give a lot of your time to these students, and I don't think that's on either, because, of if we start giving a lot of extra time to students the teaching, its cutting into the other things, the university academics we should be doing.*

Another constraint mentioned is that there is a "specific" lack of time caused by teaching offshore. In the situation below, the discourse reflects the lecturer's emotional state as the sentences get longer and have an increasingly 'breathless' quality.

*Because I went and did my offshore teaching in China, in week one of the semester here... and it's never - I personally don't think there is ever - a good time during the semester, and we have real issues in terms of how we cover our own teaching, while we are teaching offshore, and I think its particularly a problem for lower level lecturers, who have large teaching loads, because the logistics, you know, of teaching three different subjects, here across two campuses this semester, and the logistics of trying to cover your own teaching, and the fact that it was in week one of the semester, really mean that I was, by the time I came back, I was sort of behind all the time that semester.*

### **Constraints and concerns surrounding interactions with international students and staff (the "other")**

Teachers genuinely care about students, and there are essential elements in the concerns about international students' welfare and motivations. There is a real sense that the international students may not be getting an optimal experience, and may find themselves lost in a social desert. The sense of caring about the students' lostness extends beyond the immediate educational environment.

*I wouldn't like to think that they weren't getting as much out of the experience as they should. And not just educationally, but the whole thing, because obviously it's a very big move, especially if they're young and they come here and they're in a completely unfamiliar environment. And we're only seeing them at certain parts of the day. And we don't see what's going on, with the rest of their lives. I think it's more about the total experience.*

The social side of international students' lives is seen as being very important, and there is real concern that they may not be accepted into the local community:

*I feel sad when I see the international students hanging out with their own little group, usually with one or two miseryguts among the locals who'd latch on to them, rather than quickly being moulded into a... yeah, ... It's a community thing, it's about creating a community for them.*

The lack of community care leads to a perception that 'the university' sees students only as money machines, which is of great concern to the lecturers:

*The other thing I am really concerned about, about the whole thing is that the international students are often seen as money in. .... I think we've got a duty if we bring them here. I think we're almost conning, them I suppose, into, then, I suppose that international, overseas education is what they desperately need, and it may not be. And then if we take their money and don't provide much, just a very basic education and service, I think that that's really wrong. They are my concerns with it. ...Provided, I can see that there is support network for them, then it is great. But I just think it's morally wrong if we just take their money.*

### **Constraints and concerns surrounding the physical, educational and temporal environment**

Australia as a natural setting in terms of location and climate is seen as being a strong drawcard, although its remoteness as an island is seen as a barrier. However, the educational environment is seen as possibly being inappropriate for international students learning about tourism and hospitality. There are three issues to explore, here: Australian (local) students being 'insular' or 'monocultural'; the tourism and hospitality industries not accepting international students as possible employees, and the western educational paradigm being inappropriate as a learning vehicle in the first place.

As far as Australian students being 'insular' or 'monocultural', this lecturer recounts an example of intolerance in the classroom environment where local (Australian) girls criticise the dress code of international students:

*(I take a paternalistic view about dress code but ...) the local girls don't. They are very nasty about it, and seem to take delight in putting the other girls down. That doesn't often happen in the classroom thing, thank goodness, but it does happen in tutorials.*

Contact and networking in the multicultural classroom are seen as prime opportunities for local Australian students to gain a foothold in an international career, and vice versa. However, according to the following lecturer, the Australian tourism and hospitality industry does not readily accept the international students as potential employees or for work placement:

*It's a real bias in the[tourism and hospitality] industry that is, "oh international students? Too much trouble, too much hassle, they haven't got the language skills, they're unreliable, and we can't keep them, so we're not interested."*

The Australian educational paradigm, the "western" educational system is seen as a constraint, and possibly inappropriate for the international (or even local) students:

*I've got this business ethics component in my unit... and that's a very western concept. ... Because you know, a lot of it comes from the United States, and there are supposedly the tried and true rules of ethical reasoning. I mean well basically they come, I suppose from Aristotle, and all the way through. But all of it is pretty Western. ...I thought there would be some sort of Eastern philosophies in there at least. But, no I didn't come across anything, but I think is very much, a, a sort of western concept of what should be ethical business practice.*

Indeed, are the western educational systems really the 'best' ones? This lecturer queries whether this is indeed the case:

*But then, I suppose the other question is, to what extent do we have to have sort of our standard as the acceptable standard [structures of argumentation and the philosophy and thought processes underlying these] Should our standards change; should we be learning more about how different people write, is that going to be acceptable?*

In fact, in certain areas the Australian educational system is considered to be distinctly inferior to other teaching styles, and even the various languages the international students speak are seen as giving them an edge on local students:

*It's the language skills, the Chinese students are always better at mathematics, because their language, which, the language is incredibly complicated, to them mathematics is easy. Because they've had to learn that language. We don't have that discipline in Australia. We don't teach our students anything, really, anything, they have to memorise, any more.*

Surprisingly, though, some of the specific Australian industry-related subject matter is in fact experienced as suitable by international students, and the knowledge is considered generalisable. This lecturer discusses a tourism and hospitality law unit, which is geared to the Australian constitution:

*I teach a lot of stuff that's within the context of the Australian constitution and all this sort of stuff. But I am amazed that the students accept it all. And I teach it and I try and justify it on the basis that okay, you can't study law in a vacuum. You've got to study it within a legal system...And they're fine with that. They are very accepting and sometimes they'll give an example of what things might be like, elsewhere. Which is great.... I think that they think of it as a way of broadening their understanding of another system, and, I think from the students that I've had and the ones that I've spoken to, they see, that it helps them actually understand the context in which they are studying here.*

The temporal environment is strongly influenced by internationalised education. Constraints of time and, interlinked with this, student numbers, are frequently mentioned. In some cases, it is not specified who, or what causes this – it is "the system":

*The system doesn't ever really give you enough time.*

In some cases, though, the short semester is seen as a constraint in itself.

*... as our semester gets shorter, you know which makes it hard. And we had a very messy semester two because we had industrial action, ... so we had three days of industrial action all of which, I guess all of which makes it quite difficult to have a sort of smooth continuity with the students. And it poses a problem with group work, in terms of forming the groups, getting them settled and started on the assignment,*

The sheer numbers of students can cause time restraints in themselves, and solutions are sought in some form of “mechanism”:

*.. so the dilemma is, you get 148 students, they will range from some of those, which are absolutely struggling, and with those numbers of students, and the overall number we're coordinating, it is very difficult to detect the ones that are absolutely struggling early on, and at a time, and to have some mechanism to try and assess them, especially if you are not their tutor, or you know, and in the other sorts of systems.*

This seems to lead to a depersonalisation of education, which is a serious issue in the perception of this lecturer. Their personal contact with students has been lost through sheer pressure of numbers and time, and the students become strangers:

*I think that the frightening thing is these days that we have so many students that we coordinate in a semester, that, you know, here I've got this pair of students that are in my tutorial, they are Asian students: I don't know where they're from, I've never had the time to actually find out that; they did an assignment on a resort in Hong Kong, so maybe, I don't know, they're either Malaysian or, I don't know, from Hong Kong.*

## DISCUSSION

### Objective and subjective referents

There are two issues to keep in mind when considering constraints and concerns in a broad context such as teaching in the multicultural setting. The first is that it can be quite misleading to focus on the constraints out of context, without considering the accompanying joys. The mind map exploring the essence of the experience (below, Fig. 3) details both joys (red) as well as constraints (blue), some under the same headings. The second issue, and strongly linked to the first, is that lecturer's perceptions and responses to situations can vary quite widely, depending on the character, attitude and skills of the lecturer. So, for example, there are many cases where one lecturer faces a particular issue and struggles with it, whereas another will have the same issue and either not see it as a problem, or solve the problem if it does arise. A clear example – not linked to concerns and constraints – is the practice of placing students in multicultural groups for assignment purposes. Quotes are given below, in italics. As you will see, the objective referents (the practice of placing students in multicultural groups) remain much the same but the subjectivity varies considerably (for more on this see Wengraf, 2001). So, while one lecturer views a particular issue as a constraint, another lecturer may even see the same issue as liberating.

The lecturer below sees this practice as potentially problematic and capable of generating conflict; as difficult for Australian students; and the Australian students complain:

*I had one girl in here recently, saying, I forced them into groups, as I do with their second assignment each semester, and she was very upset. ... and her underlying problem was, she'd been grouped with a Malaysian girl and a Thai girl.*

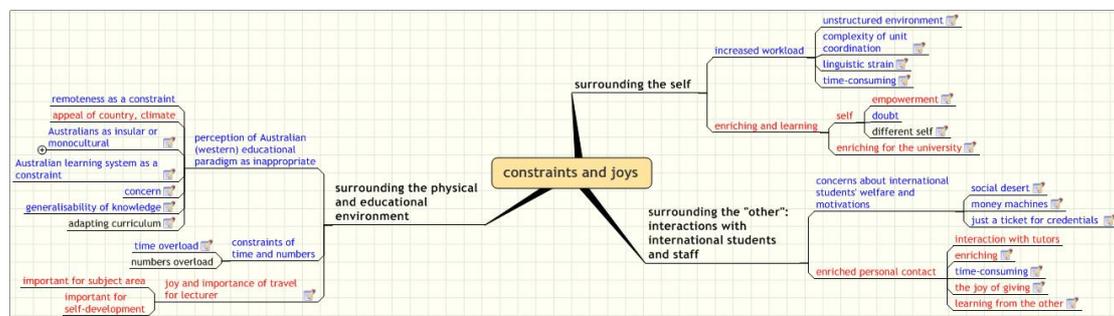
However, another lecturer sees this issue as intrinsic to and generic to group work, and not an issue related to international groupings:

*So there are some of those problems that do exist, but then again that happens with the Australian students too, its not something that we can pick and say, “oh-oh, different cultures”. This happens, we get all-Australian groups that come in and say, “oh, he did all and, he did none, or he didn’t do what he was supposed to do and we did all the work”*

In the experience of the lecturer below, multicultural groupings can be a very beneficial process for the students. The group referred to below comprised of four members of differing ages, experiences, and nationalities. It was one of the many positive group experiences described.

*I can remember one mature aged student who said of his group that I’d formed a little United Nations, which had initially led them all to pull their hair out; but they met weekly before and after the class, and you know they just turned in some really excellent work, and they really rose to the occasion. I mean that’s the sort of pinnacle ultimate experience.... it was amazing to watch how they evolved, just what they learned though the whole experience. They got an excellent mark for the final assignment.*

So, the issue of whether something is perceived as a constraint or as a joy not can depend on the perceptions of the lecturer – perhaps the attitude and resilience of the lecturer, or their strategies and approach to teaching, or even the mood at the time of interview. This is entirely in accordance with the theories of perception, and as Moran (2000) argues, “subjectivity must be understood as inextricably involved in the process of constituting objectivity”. In this paper, as we have seen, the focus is on the constraints and concerns as subjective referents for the tourism and hospitality academic.



**Figure 3: interpretation of paradigmatic model on essential constraints and joys using mind mapping technique**

### Concerns and constraints

The concerns and constraints as experienced by the lecturers do depict a profound sense of ‘lostness’ as an essence of the teaching in a multicultural setting. The eidetic intuition is that, on the level of the self, the subjective referents (Wengraf, 2001) depict people who feel they have lost their way. Consider the cumulative effect of the phrases “you’re really sort of floundering”, “you didn’t know exactly what you were supposed to do”, “you didn’t exactly know what your job was”, “you don’t know anything about the students’ background”, “it’s becoming more complex”, “I feel my whole history, my whole background, my whole education will be turned on its head”, “the power is taken away from you as a teacher”, “it’s a strain”, “It’s very difficult”, “you’re the one who feels the deficiency is on your part since there’s lots of them and there is only one of you, and you feel, you know, feel that your

work's gone". On a discourse level, although the quite considerable impact of paralanguage on meaning and communication is not generally taken into account, a certain amount of emotion is conveyed in gestures, such as the lecturer throwing hands in the air; or the breathless quality as the words tumble over each other.

On the level of the intercultural other, the main concern is not the difficulty of cross-cultural interaction such as outlined by interculturalists (e.g. Hofstede, 2001; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998), or the varying learning styles of the international students (Barron, 2004; Breitborde, 1993; Chan & Treacy, 1996; Kato, 2001) but rather the genuine concern, even "sadness", that the students may have landed in a social desert. "Creating a community" for international students both on and off campus, during working hours and during leisure time, is perceived as all the more important for them because "they're in a completely unfamiliar environment". If that is not done it is seen as "morally wrong if we just take their money" and that we may be "almost conning them". The use of the word "just" carries great weight here – conveying the sense that an institution blithely takes money without providing care in return. The eidetic intuition here, too, is that on a subjective level the lecturers feel that the international students themselves are lost in potentially uncaring territory.

The constraints and concerns surrounding the environment are quite diverse. The concern includes a sense that the curriculum is not appropriate for international students – as is maintained by those who argue for the design of inclusive curricula (e.g. Cheng & Tam, 1997; Das, 2005; Haigh, 2002; Wood et al., 2005). It is on this level, in fact, that adaptation of the curriculum to the learning styles of international students, such as argued by Barron (2004) on behalf of Confucian heritage students, or Kato (2001) for Japanese learners, might carry more weight. The temporal constraints caused by time and numbers, however, are seen as alienating the lecturer from the student, which is seen as "frightening" as it depersonalises education. Again here, the eidetic intuition is one where the student and lecturer are 'lost' from each other.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper focuses on the darker side of the lecturers' lived experiences. For a fuller picture one can, of course, look to the lecturers' concurrent positive experiences of multicultural education. As mentioned above, concerns and constraints of teaching in a multicultural setting cannot simply be viewed separately from other, more positive issues. In fact, as the discussion of subjective and objective referents has shown, the same issue can be seen both as a constraint or as a joy, depending on the perception of the lecturer. Nonetheless, the voices speak of an essential 'lostness' in the global environment, a temporal, political, personal and educational environment: the lecturers themselves feel lost, there is concern that students feel lost in a social desert; and the pressures of time and numbers depersonalises education, rendering the lecturer and student 'lost' from each other. In a phenomenological sense, the 'eidosis' or essence of the concerns and constraints of teaching in the multicultural setting is one of 'lostness'.

If too many tourism and hospitality educators find themselves 'lost' in multicultural educative setting, this may have profound implications for international tertiary tourism and hospitality education. The importance of "creating a community" for international students both on and off campus, during working hours and during leisure time; the creation of an inclusive curriculum; more time and opportunity given for staff development and training; and the great importance of a good educational relationship between lecturer and student are conclusions that can be drawn on the management level. It is not the purpose of the researcher's PhD study however, to offer solutions, but rather to raise understanding of the complexity and depth of the multicultural teaching experience.

The conclusion one can draw here stems from the evidence of a very deep sense of care that the lecturers show about their teaching, about their students, and about the curriculum; the sense that it really matters, on a personal and professional level. In an increasingly impersonal world where the global demand for international higher education is set to grow enormously, yet whereby, under the current political climate, resources available for tertiary education are diminishing, this evidence of care is reassuring, provided that the educational system allows for the care to be expressed. The balance of finding joy in teaching in a multicultural context is an extremely important factor in this, for without the hope of joy to provide motivation to teach well and with care, the quality of teaching and learning will suffer. Ongoing research in this area is therefore important, as understanding the joys may well redress the lostness that lecturers may feel at times. The researcher's PhD study will continue to seek other 'eidos' or essences of the lived experience of teaching in a multicultural classroom, and it remains to be seen what the eidos of the joys and benefits are. This will be explored in the author's next paper.

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