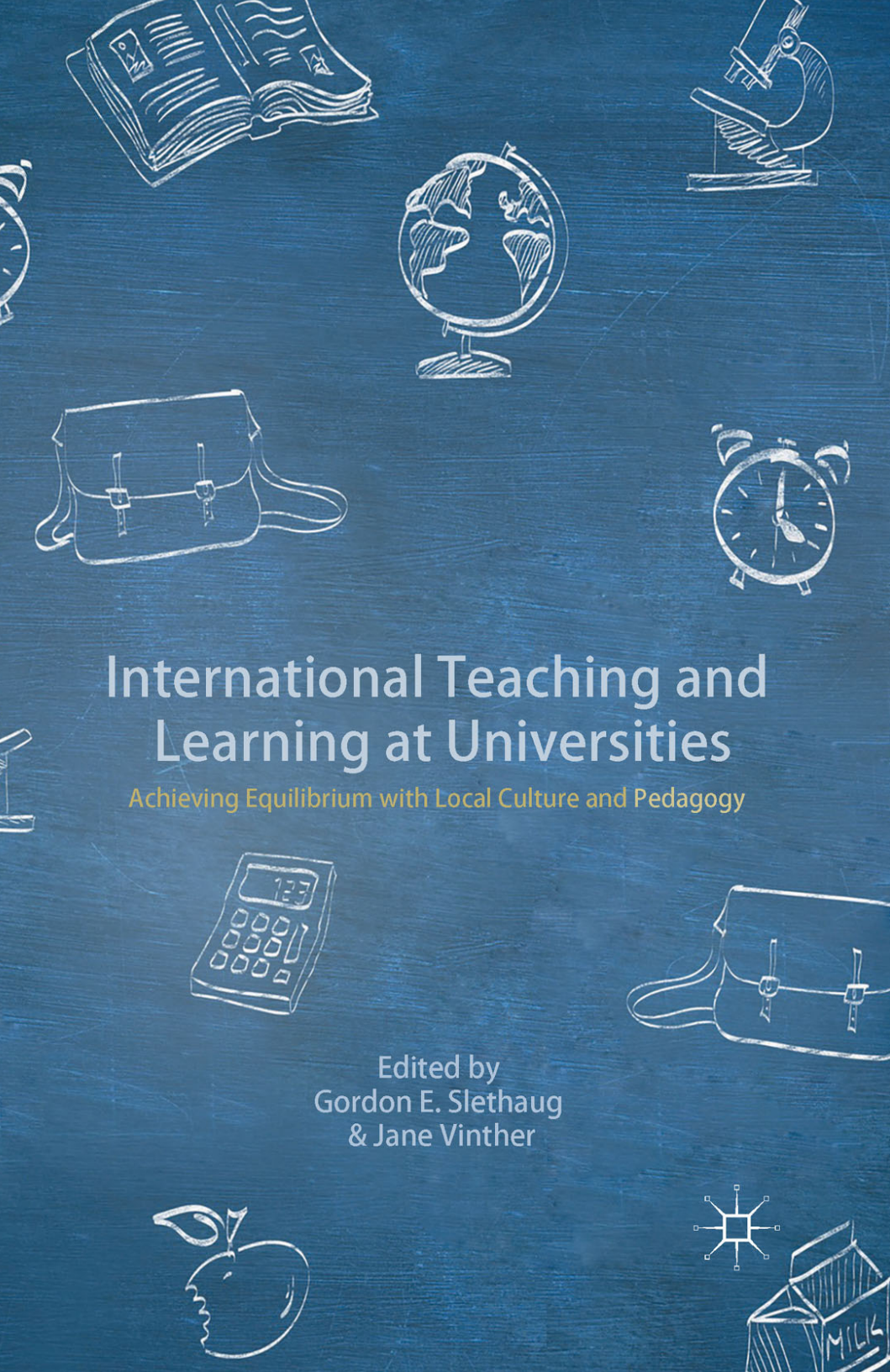

International Teaching and Learning at Universities

Achieving Equilibrium with Local Culture and Pedagogy

Edited by
Gordon E. Slethaug
& Jane Vinther

International Teaching and Learning at Universities

International Teaching and Learning at Universities

Achieving Equilibrium with Local Culture and Pedagogy

Edited by Gordon E. Slethaug and Jane Vinther

palgrave
macmillan

INTERNATIONAL TEACHING AND LEARNING AT UNIVERSITIES

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2015 978-1-137-47513-8

First published in 2015 by PALGRAVE MACMILLAN® in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Where this book is distributed in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world, this is by Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN 978-1-349-69287-3 ISBN 978-1-137-47514-5 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9781137475145

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

International teaching and learning at universities : achieving equilibrium with local culture and pedagogy / edited by Gordon E. Slethaug and Jane Vinther.
pages cm
Includes index.
Summary: "International Teaching and Learning at Universities investigates both the positive and the more problematic aspects of the internationalization of education. The flow of students to universities is no longer unidirectional from East to West but truly global with a diminishing difference between the two major educational centers. Slethaug and Vinther explain how liberal education, the movement of students across the globe, autonomy for students and teachers, and internationalization of education influence each other in constructing a new educational reality. These elements are vital to the continued development of learning, economic growth, and the democratic process of our societies in the East and West"—Provided by publisher.

1. International education. 2. Education, Humanistic. 3. Education, Higher. I. Slethaug, Gordon. II. Vinther, Jane.
LC1090.I5793 2015
370.116—dc23 2014028307

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Amnet.

First edition: January 2015

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

List of Tables

List of Transcription Conventions

Bold = pronounced with stress/emphasis

, = short pause, less than 0.5 second

(2.0) = pause in seconds

“give me that” = reporting direct speech

: (as in ah:) means that the vowel sound is prolonged

xx = incomprehensible

// = interruption; //as I said// = overlapping speech

? = question/rising intonation

[with] = word inserted by the transcriber to ease comprehension

[. . .] = turn left out

Acknowledgments

The editors extend their gratitude to the Danish Research Council for Independent Research; the Institute of Language and Communication at the University of Southern Denmark and Director Steffen Nordahl Lund; as well as the School of Foreign Languages at Sun Yat-sen University, PRC, and Dean Chenguang Chang, for supporting our project.

The present publication originates in a project primarily funded by the Danish Research Council for two symposia held at the University of Southern Denmark, Kolding Campus, and at Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Gordon E. Slethaug

Over four million university students go abroad annually to study, roughly the same number that attend the international campuses of American and British universities as well as those from other countries, and an additional five million students attend international secondary schools at home or abroad. International education has become a fixed reality for universities and schools in such native English-speaking countries as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada, but also increasingly in large non-native English-speaking countries, such as China, France, Germany, Russian Federation, Japan, Italy, and Malaysia (see table 1.1 for the top ten countries involved).[1] It has also become important to smaller Scandinavian countries where English is not native, but is spoken with relative ease and proficiency by the majority of the population. Then, too, international education has become big business, generating billions of dollars, pounds, renminbi, kroner, and other currencies to assist universities and local businesses in the host countries.

No one can contest the huge growth and economic importance of international education, but often the rapid growth and large economies of scale take precedence over the complex strategies of teaching and learning for international students, putting aside the enormous issues and barriers of language, culture, government policy, financing, and institutional regulation. As a result of the rapid growth of educational internationalization, the sums of money earned by the universities and their communities, and the complexity of the issues involved, international teaching and learning have only begun to be studied in the required depth in the last decade. There still is much work to be done, and this book will take up that debate by looking at East and West.

Table 1.1 Top ten destinations for international students, 2013

No.	*Country*	*2003*	*2004*	*2005*	*2006*	*2009–2010*	*2012*
1	United States	586,323	572,509	565,039	564,776	690,923	740,482
2	United Kingdom	275,270	300,055	318,400	330,080	415,585	427,686
3	China	77,715	110,844	141,087	162,695	238,184	328,330
4	France	221,471	244,335	255,585	265,039	278,213	288,544
5	Germany	227,026	246,136	246,334	248,357	244,776	265,292
6	Australia	218,654	236,142	255,925	281,633	320,170	245,500
7	Canada	46,381	41,338	42,590	39,008	161,679	193,647
8	Russian Federation						173,627
9	Japan	109,508	117,302	121,812	117,927	132,720	137,756
10	Malaysia	30,390	31,664	33,890	44,390	90,501	86,923

The statistics for the Russian Federation are drawn from UNESCO (2014) rather than IIE Project Atlas.

Source: "Atlas of Student Mobility" (Institute of International Education 2013).

The base of research materials on international teaching and learning has been expanding rapidly in the last decade as students from Asia (especially China, Korea, and India) have gone abroad for undergraduate and graduate education and as Europeans have traveled to other countries in Europe and to other continents. Increasingly, the flow of students is also going the other way, and China now receives many more students from abroad than it sends. With the expansion of Asian economies, education has become more affordable both at home and abroad, and many North American, European, and Asian students are traveling abroad for short- and long-term stays, and scholars have undertaken to research the learning experiences of those students.

Among the most important of these studies has been the Chinese-learner "debate," beginning with Biggs and Watkins (1996, 2001) and then moving to studies by Ryan and Carroll (2005), Clark and Gieve (2006), Jin and Cortazzi (2006), Slethaug (2007), Coverdale-Jones and Rastall (2009), and Ryan and Slethaug (2010). A considerable portion of this debate centers on the issue of rote memorization, which has been such a prominent feature in the Western perception of the Chinese and other Asians. A negative view of rote learning has contributed heavily to the deficit picture of Asian

learners as hierarchical, subservient to authority, overpolite and passive, lecture oriented, unwilling to speak out in class, and incapable of critical thinking (Ninnes, Aitchison, and Kalos 1999). A counter but also stereotypical view at work in the public imagination is the surplus view of the Chinese as quick learners, hard workers, and especially proficient at math and science. This surplus view has also attached itself to South Asians (especially Indians) because they have done extraordinarily well in American education, professions, and business. Although most studies have reversed these deficit and surplus views that paradoxically exist side by side, they linger in the public imagination (Vinther 2010) and even with university teachers, who, according to Ninnes and Hellstén (2005), feel some exhaustion not only from such public perceptions but from the reality of the intercultural challenges of international students in the classroom. Ironically, however, as Coverdale-Jones and Rastall have discovered, these same deficit views have become attached to Western learners attending Japanese universities, so perhaps there is something much deeper to be learned as international students study in languages that are not native to them and adapt to cultures with very different customs.

As a result of this global movement of students, universities all over Europe and increasingly Asia have been implementing English-medium options for international students in a variety of different areas, including literature and linguistics, design, business and finance, engineering, politics, international relations, medicine, and the sciences, and so many others, for the benefit of international programs and universities in many different countries.

It is clear that universities (and their communities) do benefit financially through their participation in internationalization, but it is still unclear how responsive and responsible they are to their international students. On the plus side, most universities now have international offices that explain the university system to their international students and may help find housing, medical care, and other services that students require. Some universities in Anglophone countries have also implemented remedial English courses so that all students have more of an equal opportunity to meet academic requirements and to share in the classroom and social experience, and that is also true of countries like Japan that want international students to study in that language. On a more negative note, universities in the West with a few exceptions have not undertaken the task of seeing how classroom teaching and learning can be improved for the international students and the home students that study with them.

This volume will explore various features of the new pedagogies of international teaching and learning at the university level, including the difficulties and reasons why we need to persist. Among other issues in international

education, it will consider increasing student mobility, not just to Anglophone countries but everywhere; traditional and emerging educational and cultural values in the West and East, including the important role of liberal education; and student assessments of teaching and learning as well as peer assessments of student work. It will also investigate the local (especially Hong Kong, China, Japan, Malaysia, the United Kingdom, and Denmark) in relation to the global in transnational teaching and cross-cultural learning. The geographical areas covered illuminate opposing traditions, and this volume takes the innovative approach of viewing these traditions not only as cultural differences to be bridged but as an opportunity to examine and revise the international classroom from the fresh perspective of common East-West efforts in the construction of knowledge, especially from the vantage point of liberal education.

This study argues that universities need to extend themselves in order to ensure the best academic and social experience, and that one way to begin that process is through looking at the different educational philosophies at work globally and what the teachers and students really want. Other ways include implementing special English-media programs, international curriculum design, and particular courses that will appeal to international and local students; investigating differences and similarities in the perceptions of students from East and West as well as productive ways to teach them together; and ways of assessing the academic and social experiences of international students that can assist in changing teaching strategies, fostering creative learning challenges, and building a positive social climate.

As Jane Vinther argues in Chapter 2, a useful place to begin is for lecturers to reflect self-consciously on the philosophical and pedagogical underpinnings of their educational values about the "good" teacher and student. In a 2013 questionnaire given to faculty members in Canada and Denmark, all without exception thought of themselves as having full control over, and agency in, their courses and subject matter and fully believed that they were inculcating democratic values of independence and autonomy, integrity, and self-initiative in their students. They were not, however, able to articulate a particular philosophy of classroom teaching that would accomplish this. In Northern Europe (including the United Kingdom and, by extension, other Anglophone countries), the idea of teachers and university students being autonomous and self-initiating came about during the Enlightenment through von Humboldt's reflection on the need to change from the rote learning of the so-called Latin tradition to a more liberal one that raised self- and critical-awareness of all participants and prepared them for their new role in the developing democracies. However, not all European cultures embraced this notion to the same degree (or at all), and southern and eastern European

cultures still adhere to a stronger tradition of dependence on the lecturer and his/her word. Vinther argues that it is necessary, then, that von Humboldt's idea of liberal education be articulated in order to explore the values that are implicit in it and that might be worth keeping as the classrooms go global in East and West.

In Chapter 3, Chenguang Chang talks about the development of English-language liberal education in China over different periods of time and with different influences and values. His own university (Sun Yat-Sen University) was established as the National Guangdong University in 1924 by Dr. Sun Yat-sen and developed into a highly regarded contemporary mega-university of currently more than 70,000 students. At this time, all students admitted to the university must pass an exam in English—as is true for all Chinese universities, though English proficiency is considered more acute in faculties like Medicine and Business, where many of the courses are taught in English. As a response to internationalization and the increase of overseas students in Chinese universities, many universities throughout China are introducing liberal education. At Sun Yat-Sen University, the Arts Faculty has begun an elite liberal arts college that admits some 30 highly qualified students each year, with the idea that the students will study many of the courses in English in a liberal-education environment and become familiar with the values of their counterparts in the West in relation to their own foundations in the East. Apart from this elite college, the university has also established a General Education Unit, which is responsible for coordinating the common-core general-education curriculum for the whole university, where English-language liberal education also features prominently.

As Janette Ryan argues in Chapter 4, while this liberal-education notion of the autonomous and self-initializing teacher and student is not historically part of Confucian-heritage cultures (CHC), where respect for the harmony of the group and the valuing of revered teachers are given higher value than in the West, internationalization has made the Chinese much more aware of those values in relation to their own. She notes that much of the initial criticism of Asian students coming to Anglophone countries was that they were "deficit" learners who did not share in the values of the Western classroom and could contribute little to it, even while they wanted a degree from the West. She notes, however, that with increasing internationalization going in several directions at once (East to West, West to East, South to North, and North to South), these negative stereotypes have begun to fade (though they have not entirely disappeared), and international students are now thought to contribute significantly to the globalized university. From a study done among faculty members in China in 2013, she has found, and sets out to

show, that views of education and pedagogical values are increasingly more similar than different between the West and the East and that international education needs to build on this mutuality while still recognizing creative differences.

In Chapter 5, Tricia Coverdale-Jones analyses the experiences of international students and the perception of them by faculty members in the United Kingdom and various countries in Asia (China, Japan, and Malaysia). This chapter looks carefully at the ways in which international students from the West are incorporated within Asian universities, for example. One of the striking points is that Japanese lecturers often have a deficit view of Western students, thinking that they are limited by their lack of Japanese language and culture, lack of critical thinking, and inability to fully participate in the classroom experiences—all of this while the official government and university policy is to participate in globalization and increase international teaching and learning. As she notes, students in these various countries increasingly want similar innovative, democratic styles of teaching with interesting, technology-driven lectures, and good discussion. This chapter also notes that in the past research on international teaching and learning focused on the adaptation of students to their new environment, but that lecturers are slowly recognizing that they, too, must adapt to the internationalizing of universities. How they will do that is still not certain, though the Academy of Higher Education in the United Kingdom is helping instructors make real strides in new thinking.

In Chapter 6, Gordon Slethaug notes that, because government and universities have been making commitments to ramp up internationalization and admitting thousands of international students even before pedagogical curricular implications have been thought out and infrastructure has been put in place, the academic and social well-being of students has taken a back seat. While universities do have procedures in place that could be used to survey international students and discover their opinion about their teaching and learning environment, in fact they usually don't. The function of most of the current assessments of teaching by students is mainly for all students in given courses to assess the teacher. Slethaug consequently takes up the issue of better questionnaires and assessment forms as a way to discover what international students think about their experiences in and out of the classroom in their adopted environments. Because most university student evaluations of teachers do not separate out the locals from the international students, little is known formally about the international learning experience per se. Slethaug first discusses the value of a series of questionnaires based on agency, community, and education (ACE) to be given exclusively to international students and then looks at the results of these questionnaires

in Malaysia. Among other things, these results confirm that students from East and West and North and South want many of the same things in the classroom and their social environments. Because of the legacy of liberal democratic traditions in Europe and North America, Western education has validated independent thinking and self-starting teachers and students, and it has been widely assumed that the East does not share these values. However, as Ryan also notes, with globalization much has changed, and these surveys indicate that 95 percent of students do want the same things: interesting and engaged lecturers, class discussion involving everyone in a more-or-less democratic classroom, and access to new technology in and out of the classroom. Many international students find that they cannot easily get into the local cultures, but so long as they are engaged and happy in the university, that doesn't matter so much, but a large number would still like to be better integrated into both university and society at large. This chapter concludes with a discussion of how the results of this questionnaire were used by a midsize Malaysian university to develop a strategy of administrative and teaching assistance to international students, suggesting that this kind of targeted assessment is beneficial but needs to be done in conjunction with the university administration and not only a given department or faculty.

Hans Ladegaard in Chapter 7 finds that adaptation simply defined or teaching practices of a certain sort are not enough for either lecturers or students. He notes that, in surveying home and international students in Hong Kong about their perception of others in their classroom, university, and general culture, many showed both negative out-group stereotypes and intergroup prejudice, which hinder learning and are not overcome by simple principles of adaptation. He argues that fostering intergroup dialogue and analyzing cultural and linguistic phenomena from a cross-cultural perspective are at the center of the more complex adaptation required for successful international teaching, learning, and socialization. The chapter argues that courses on intercultural communication for students and seminars for lecturers, especially with an emphasis on East and West, can fundamentally change perceptions and lead to more effective academic and social experiences. The aim of such courses is to make students *aware* of cultural differences (and similarities), encourage them to share their experiences, and, thus, help them overcome cultural barriers. Hence, an important part of the process of adaptation must consist of curricular changes that can equip students and lecturers to be more effective in dealing with pedagogical and cultural difference. Importantly, students who enrolled in this kind of course found that it helped liberalize and liberate their thinking about their own identity and that of others.

In Chapter 8, Meng Fan, Sue Robson, and David Leat argue that growing efforts to internationalize curricula demand new ways of teaching, learning, and assessment of student work. They claim that this assessment of student work can impact on learner identity and influence student progression and completion of their studies. As a result of a growing dissatisfaction with traditional forms of assessment, a variety of assessment approaches, including formative assessment, peer assessment, and self-assessment, has been promoted to encourage deeper engagement with learning and enhance learner autonomy and motivation. However, there has been relatively little research on how international students perform in innovative assessment environments or how these environments affect them.

International students who have made a significant investment to study abroad may be significantly stressed by the assessment practices they encounter. This chapter presents an empirical case study investigating postgraduate international students' experiences of peer assessment in a UK university from 2010 to 2012. It investigates students' academic transitions and intercultural learning based on five postgraduate taught modules (Business, Education A, Education B, Chemical Engineering, and Computer Science). It adapts Bernstein's (1996) concepts to aid understanding of international students' performance during peer assessment and the challenges presented to their learning in various modules. In the process, the chapter supports the development of formative peer assessment and provides a new perspective on the implications of assessment practices for internationalization of the curriculum, especially as the process of peer assessment in groups becomes a tool for intercultural communication and transnational unity.

In Chapter 9, Gordon Slethaug sums up some of the issues and debates of these chapters, concluding that, while this is an exciting time of growth in international education, governments and universities have urged that large numbers of international students be admitted, even though administrative, curricular, and pedagogical scaffolding has not kept pace—and may not be able to because of financial cutbacks. Indeed, he and other contributors fear that institutions have not adequately (or at all) considered the repercussions of teaching and learning for the international students. While educators of international education have begun this conversation, it needs to be brought to the fore in each institution. Consequently, based on his own findings and those of other contributors to this volume, Slethaug has identified particular ways that universities can change administrative and teaching practices to create more inclusive and diverse institutions where both home and international students can prosper to the best of their abilities and where teachers and students can engage in the process of internationalization in new and thought-provoking ways.

These chapters in this collection, then, further the debate about the best teaching and learning practices in the international classroom and community by offering a variety of creative alternatives. Clearly, some want the international students incorporated to the degree that they will not feel a disjunction between their learning opportunities and those of the home students. Others want a classroom that incorporates pedagogy founded on fully articulated principles of intercultural communications and transnational pedagogy and that is able to shape the curriculum and teaching practices so that international students will feel welcome for who they are and where they have come from. And still others want the opportunity to create a self-reflexive classroom that can take up and use the pedagogical principles in a way that reflects the ideals of a liberal education.

Together, these essays provide a rich opportunity to reflect on and address the needs of international students in the classroom, on the campus, and out in the community.

Note

1. For 2012 UNESCO (2014) listed the top 11 destination countries for tertiary students as the United States (740,482), the United Kingdom (427,686), France (271,399), Australia (249,588), Germany (206,986), Russian Federation (173,627), Japan (150,617), Canada (120,960), China (88,979), Italy (77,732) and Malaysia (63,625)—in that order. These figures are considerably divergent from the Atlas of Student Mobility, especially concerning China. Project Atlas also does not list the Russian Federation or Italy, so everything has to be regarded as an approximation.

References

Bernstein, B. (1996). *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity: Theory, Research, Critique.* London: Taylor and Francis.

Biggs, J., and D. Watkins. (1996). "The Chinese Learner in Retrospect." In In J. B. Biggs and D. A. Watkins, (Eds.) *The Chinese Learner: Cultural, Psychological and Contextual Influences*. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, the University of Hong Kong.

Biggs, J., and D. Watkins. (2001). "Insights into Teaching the Chinese Learner." In J. B. Biggs and D. A. Watkins (Eds.), *Teaching the Chinese Learner: Psychological and Pedagogical Perspectives.* Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, the University of Hong Kong. 277–300.

Carroll, J. (2002). "Suggestions for Teaching International Students More Effectively." *Learning and Teaching Briefing Paper Series.* Accessed August 8, 2014. http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsld/resources/briefing_papers/international_students.pdf