

Hosting Australian Social Work Students on Exchange: The Search for Equity and Mutual Benefit between the Global South and North

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Abstract

Social work programs in the Global North are increasingly engaged in international student exchange with countries in the Indo-Pacific that belong to the Global South. However, there is a paucity of literature exploring the experiences of the institutions that host these exchanges. This article reports on the findings of a qualitative project that sought host institutions' perspectives on the value of student exchanges. The findings indicate a perception that some mutual benefit and reciprocity can be established in international exchange but that disparity in resourcing, absence of opportunities for hosts to travel to Australia, and the privileged status of knowledge produced in the Global North maintains an inequity between exchange partners. These findings highlight the need for steps that can be taken toward reciprocity while demonstrating the impact power-imbalance can have on the nature of Global South–North student exchange programs.

Implication Statement

- Research has shown that student exchange programs between the Global North and the Global South are often underpinned and shaped by a significant power imbalance in favour of the Global North;
- Findings show that Australian (Global North) knowledge is privileged over knowledge indigenous to the host country and that financial constraints prevent host organisations from equal participation in programs;
- A form of reciprocity can be established whereby organisations in the Global South can access benefits associated with the programs, without sending their own students on exchange.

Keywords

Indo-Pacific, qualitative research, host institutions, partnerships, Global South, Global North

Background

The demand for a globalised higher education system has increased efforts to internationalise higher education content and to support the development of students' global competence (Khan & Agnew, 2017). This is particularly the case in the field of social work where there is recognition that many social issues, such as poverty and the well-being of women and children, require concerted global action from culturally competent professionals (Healy, 2008). Further, large scale migration and displacement stemming from conflict and war means that Australian social workers increasingly engage with culturally diverse clients (Gopalkrishnan, 2014). An opportunity to develop social work students' intercultural competence is realised through increased engagement in international field placements and other international student exchange programs (Harris et al., 2017). While more research is necessary, the extant literature suggests that, if provided opportunities to develop high levels of self-reflexivity (Jönsson, & Flem, 2018) and to prepare for their international study experience (Jones et al., 2017), students can gain a great deal from international placements and internationalisation activities (Bell & Anscombe, 2012; Fargion & Nuttman-Schwartz, 2020). However, the opportunity for equal exchange is limited between the countries of the Global North – countries often referred to as “Western” – and the countries of the Global South – “non-Western” countries that are characterised by a recent or currently ongoing industrialisation, weak democratic institutions, lower per-capita income, and a history of mostly European colonisation (Razak, 2012).

A predominantly one-way flow of students from the Global North to countries of the Global South (Australian Institute for Mobility Overseas, 2012) has been identified as a key issue in Global North–South exchange programs (Australian Institute for Mobility Overseas, 2012). To some extent, the lack of two-way flow can be addressed through targeted partnerships, active recruitment of students for inbound exchange, and creativity in exchange

options, such as summer schools (Australian Institute for Mobility Overseas, 2012). However, while these alternatives may be successful in some circumstances, it is unlikely that they can fully mitigate the host partners' and the students' reduced economic capacity to engage in exchange. Even when a two-way flow of students does occur, genuine reciprocity and collaboration can be difficult to achieve. The process of exchange can also be dominated by Global North approaches due to a perception of Global North "expertise" and the dominant influence of Global North students and practitioners during the exchange (Mirsky & Barasch, 2004; Zuchowski et al., 2017). Zuchowski et al., (2017) further argue that exchange experiences can negatively impact on host organisations and their communities by perpetuating paternalism and neo-colonialism. Influenced by the dominant social work discourse of the Global North, international exchange programs have the potential to impose knowledge on the host organisation and community. Furthermore, the cumulative effects of hosting students on exchange with little mutual benefit or acknowledgement of the one-sided nature of the exchange can have negative impacts on host organisations (Miles et al., 2016). The turnover of students may be destabilising, drain human resources, and compromise long-term organisational sustainability (Tiessen et al., 2018).

An important aspect of the literature that addresses these issues highlights the relative lack of representation of voices from the Global South (Zuchowski et al., 2017), which is a shortcoming given the critique of the influence of the Global North in international exchange. The current research is a part of a project funded by the Australian Office for Learning and Teaching through an Innovation and Development Grant, which seeks to address this gap by gaining an in-depth perspective of host organisation experiences and benefits of exchange programs.

Context and Conceptual Framework

This paper focuses on the experiences of organisations in the Indo-Pacific (a geographic region stretching from the west coast of India to the western shores of the United States, [DFAT, 2017]), which have hosted Australian social work students on international exchange from the Global North. It draws on the findings of *Going Places*, a large internationally collaborative research project that explored practice in international student exchange among Australian schools of social work and their international partners. The research was a partnership between James Cook University (Townsville and Cairns, Australia), Queensland University of Technology (Brisbane, Australia), De Paul Institute of Science and Technology (Kerala, India) and Nakhon Rajabhat Ratchasima University (Khorat, Thailand). It evolved from collaborative experiences over several years, including student and faculty exchanges, joint international conferences, and co-authored research (Miles et al., 2016; Harris et al., 2017). These experiences drew attention to the perspectives of hosts in an exchange relationship and particularly the lack of resources available to support an equitable two-way exchange of students and staff.

The *Going Places* project aimed to develop a framework for respectful approaches to international student exchange based on values of reciprocity and mutuality between Australian social work programs and hosting partners in the Indo-Pacific. The project was informed by critical post-colonial theories and the cultural legacies that significantly impact on international relationships (Razack, 2009). In accounting for the economic, political, and social impact of European colonial rule and the continued cultural and linguistic dominance of the Global North (Elam, 2019), these theories provide a lens through which inequities, power imbalance, and the authority of Western (Global North) knowledge systems can be examined. Concerns have previously been raised about a tendency within the social work profession to place emphasis on Global North theories over those of Indigenous worldviews (e.g., Gray, 2005). When engaged in exchange programs, host benefits are often assumed,

while power inequity in relationships overlooked (Miles et al., 2016; Hammersley, 2012), and the voices of host organisations are seldom heard (Miles, et al., 2016; Zuchowski et al., 2017). Seeking the perspectives of host organisations presents an opportunity to foreground non-Global North voices in the examination of the social forces and power imbalances that contribute to continued inequities.

Method

Project Overview and Research Aims

The *Going Places* project was undertaken in three reflexive phases. The first phase included a survey which established a baseline of current exchange activity in all schools of social work in Australia (see Harris et al., 2017). Using a membership list of the Australian Council of Heads of Schools of Social Work (ACHSSW), 30 schools were identified of which 27 (90%) completed the survey. Information gathered during this phase was then used to guide the selection of potential participants for the second phase of the study. The second phase consisted of qualitative, semi-structured interviews with staff from 10 host organisations in the Global South Indo-Pacific region and from 10 Australian (Global North) schools of social work. The third and final phase involved exploring project findings through a series of focus group workshops with Australian and host institutions as well as exchange and non-exchange Australian students.

In this paper, the findings from phase two of the project are presented – specifically the results of qualitative interviews with staff from organisations in the Indo-Pacific who host exchange opportunities for Australian social work students through a range of international mobility programs. Through these interviews, researchers sought to gain the perspective of host organisations to identify; (1) perceived benefits associated with international exchange programs, (2) barriers to full and equal participation in the programs, and (3) actions needed

by sending and host organisations to address identified issues and to establish equitable and reciprocal relationships.

Sampling and Participants

The researchers interviewed representatives from host institutions who partnered with Australian schools of social work and represented a diversity of locations throughout the Indo-Pacific. Ten host institutions were selected – four from India, two from the Philippines, and one each from Thailand, Fiji, Vietnam, and Cambodia. Eight of these organisations were higher education institutions, and the two organisations from Fiji and Cambodia were social welfare agencies (see Table 1). Exchange programs at the host organisations varied in length from two weeks to several months. Some programs involved providing exchange students with the opportunity to visit a range of government and non-government agencies to gain a sense of social welfare provision in the host country. Other programs placed visiting students with local agencies and provided supervision from university staff.

(Insert Table 1 about here)

The head of each host organisation was identified through the research teams' professional network and contacted by email to request the participation of a relevant staff representative in an interview. Interviews were conducted by phone with staff representatives from eight of the organisations, while representatives of the other two organisations preferred to respond in writing to the interview questions. The four men and six women ($N = 10$) who participated in the interviews are listed in Table 1 according to their country of origin. The participants held varied positions in their organisations: some were the heads of their programs. Some were international placement coordinators and others were considered to be integral to the international activity. All participants had extensive knowledge of international student exchanges and had been intimately involved in these programs. Ethical approval for

the research was granted by James Cook University. Participants received information about the research and consent forms prior to the interviews.

Data Collection and Analysis

The interview questions explored a range of practical and theoretical topics relating to student exchange. Topics included: preparation and collaborations with the Australian university partners; the nature, challenges, impact, and reciprocity of their exchange program; and plans and hopes for the future. Telephone interviews took between one hour and two hours and were audio recorded and transcribed.

Data were thematically analysed following the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, the researchers familiarised themselves with the interview transcripts, forming initial impressions of the relationship between host and sending institutions. In the following step, initial codes capturing the most basic elements of information relevant to the research questions were produced. Codes were then combined into themes. By analysing the relationships between codes, themes, and different levels of themes, initial “candidate” themes were produced, some of which were overarching and some of which were sub-themes. Themes were then revised to ensure that they represented data that were meaningful, sufficiently cohesive, and clearly distinguishable from other themes. Last, themes were defined, named, and interpreted to form an overall understanding of host organisations’ experience with the exchange programs. To minimise research bias and ensure that the interpretation of the data corresponded to the experiences and viewpoints of the participants, the research team members took a collaborative approach to the data analyses. Initial codes and themes were developed by two researchers, and the final interpretation of the overarching themes were reviewed by the team members until an agreement on meaning was reached.

Findings

An examination of the experiences of host universities and organisations revealed that, although formal agreements were in place to allow for mutual student exchange, participants reported that their organisations were unable or had limited capacity to financially support the exchange of their own students in Australia. The flow of academic staff was similarly restricted due to financial costs. This meant that the Global South host organisations were engaged in providing support to visiting students but were rarely able to send their own students elsewhere. Under these circumstances, participants described how they, in collaboration with their Australian partner university, had sought to establish a relationship characterised by mutual, if not equal, benefit. While these relationships were valued by all hosts, six of the participants also described the burden associated with the one-sided hosting of students.

Benefits of Exchange

The host organisations' relationships with the Australian universities were described as positive, friendly, and open, with seven of the participants clearly expressing enthusiasm toward the collaboration with their Australian partner university. Host organisations representatives described a range of benefits experienced as a result of participating in student exchange, including exposure to new experiences, the opportunity for knowledge creation, development of English language skills and cross-cultural competency, production of research outputs and an increased international profile for their organisation. The participant from Vietnam discussed how exposure to the sending university's assessment system had been of benefit to their own assessment practices.

... and I can know more about their assessment system because the student have to give me the assessment or feedback that I think, and if I fill out, and we can learn from that

to modify for our system. Because in Vietnam, until now we have no, no formal guidelines for supervising, for assessment at the placement for student. (IP9, Vietnam)

Interactions with exchange students were seen to enable cross-cultural learning and contribute toward the development of global competence for both the visiting exchange students from Australia and the local host students. One interview participant from India explains: *They go to a very different society in terms of culture, demography, governance, patterns of thinking etc. And when we get to experience different aspects of living in society, we naturally tend to become more innovative (IP6, India).* Exposure to exchange students from other cultures was seen to increase the understanding of host organisations different customs and practices, instilling in both staff and students; *...a confidence that you can deal with all sorts of people in one way or another (IP7, India).* Another participant from India observed the particular skills that visiting exchange students contribute: *I have noticed the kind of critical perspective students from developed countries possess. I have not seen that kind of thinking among a majority of our students (IP5, India).* The opportunity for students from both countries to bond and develop friendships was also commended. Emphasis was placed on the personal relationships that could be developed through the programs, as they seemed to enable experiences that could not otherwise be had: *Definitely the experience of bonding that leads to the destruction of stereotypes in your mind. I place prime value to that kind of an experience (IP6, India).*

The Absence of “True” Exchange

The one-way Flow

As shown in the “benefit of exchange” section, several clear benefits for the hosting organisation were identified, many of which aided in the internationalising of their

educational programs and raised international competitiveness. However, according to the interviewees, the unequal participation of host organisations and sending universities in the program was also a salient and inescapable aspect of the experience. *I think the biggest limitation is not being able to have our students go to Australia and that's the part we think is a bit unfair* (IP2, Philippines). One participant from India, expressed similar concerns, adding that; *I don't have a hope that it will change in the near future* (IP5, India). Four participants elaborated on the restricted flow of students to Australia, stating that the barrier to equal participation was monetary. The lack of funds was sometimes compounded by exchange rates which result in significantly cheaper living expenses for those travelling from the Global North to exchanges in the Global South.

The mainly one-way flow of students in the programs meant that time and resource demands were disproportionately borne by the host organisations. Visa requirements and practical arrangements associated with the programs were reported to require significant commitments from hosts. Two participants described how the sourcing of appropriate agencies and qualified supervisors for placements involved lengthy negotiations and preparations to ensure the learning and the safety and wellbeing of students on exchange. Four participants also reported that language barriers needed to be managed as few exchange students could speak the local language in any of the host countries. The need to hire translators was identified as a significant cost that was met by the host organisations.

We have to make sure we've got enough staff in the teams to be able to mobilize out into the field to collect data. So there's quite a big commitment in terms of the amount of staff that requires, but also ... translation is a huge problem. ... transport out into the field, and the time to try and build that around other people's busy schedules ... so there's also human resource time (IP1, Cambodia).

During the first phase of the *Going Place* project, the exchange activities of Australian schools of social work were surveyed, indicating that 79% of schools provided cultural awareness training to students prior to international placements (Harris et al., 2017). Despite this, four participants identified that some exchange students needed support to manage their experiences in a culturally different and often socially challenging environment; *I think one of the issues is the level of support sometimes that students may require coming into a developing context* (IP1, Cambodia). Two of these participants also described how they had had to intervene to resolve cultural misunderstandings between exchange student and host staff. Participants pointed out that students who were independent, self-sufficient, and culturally sensitive greatly eased the burden of support on the host institutions. They found that the different nationalities of exchange students also meant that the program had to adapt to suit different cultural backgrounds, languages, and learning styles. Participant IP3 (Thailand) and Participant IP1 (Cambodia) articulated the need and difficulties in balancing their investment in and cost of the exchange programs against other work-related demands and the limited financial resources of their organisations.

Lesser Partners

There was a self-perceived skills deficit among some host organisations relative to their partner university in Australia. When positioned alongside the reportedly privileged status of knowledge generated in the Global North, an imbalance was perceived. In particular, the intercultural learning opportunities that the programs offered students was identified by six participants as the main contribution of the host organisation, while skills and knowledge were perceived to have been mainly provided by the Australian exchange students; *...many students who come here, they want to learn the culture rather than the knowledge or skill which they might learn from our country* (IP3, Thailand). The quote given below by the

participant from Vietnam suggests that this was particularly true for countries where the social work discipline was in its infancy.

... the social work profession is very young in Vietnam ... we have very little experience in understanding what the ... different dimensions of social work. And we think that having international students come here, we can not only support them in the placement or understanding our system, but also we can learn from their perspective, their way of working, the ideas from sharing their social system, or social work services in their countries. (IP9, Vietnam)

It has previously been noted that the unidirectional flow of skills and knowledge from the sending organisation means that an opportunity to advance global social work practice by embracing diverse, Indigenous world views and co-produce knowledge and theory is lost (Ng, 2012). While three participants stated that this flow of knowledge could represent a valuable learning opportunity, frustration was also expressed. For example, when describing their inability to send their academic staff to their Australian partner university, one interview participant from the Philippines explained:

... we think that there is a lot to learn from our experience ... our application of human rights, our application of gender analysis ... the issues of migration. There are many areas we too can share with the students and social work schools at [Australian university] but we don't have funding for that either, right. (IP2, Philippines)

Managing Inequities – Pragmatism and Safeguarding

Participants often presented a pragmatic view, whereby benefits and opportunities were understood as existing within constraints. Six participants explicitly described how acting as a host in an exchange relationship was seen as an opportunity to access

international perspectives in a manner that worked around limited resources, in lieu of the opportunity to send their own staff or students overseas to gain these international experiences. In this manner, mutual benefit could be achieved by trading hosting duties for other benefits that were associated with the programs. For example, two participants (IP1 Cambodia and IP2 Philippines) stressed the importance of the research work undertaken by students as part of their exchange, whereby students took on projects that the host organisation could not manage due to resource or funding restrictions. Here, the participant from Cambodia described their focus on actively pursuing placement opportunities that provided value to the organisation:

Ok, well we would want to see their CV to see if they've got experiences to match what we're looking for, so we normally look for research experience. . . and really trying to match what they're interested in doing to what we need to, to be done really. So it's a win-win situation. (IP1, Cambodia)

A related sentiment was expressed by the interview participant from the Philippines who stressed the importance of value-adding from the host agency:

... it's important that they give something back to the agency that they are working with, some kind of research project that they can leave behind that helps the agency they have been placed in and we've got some fantastic research projects from the students (IP2, Philippines).

These quotes provide examples of host pragmatism in actively prioritising tangible outputs such as research projects.

Despite the perceived financial inequity between exchange partners, six participants expressed clear ideas about the elements of developing equal relationships under uneven

circumstances. Clear communication of goals was highlighted as pivotal to the development of healthy and long-term relationships:

I think we should have an open discussion or talk to each other and make consultation about the program. What your requirements or what your purpose when sending your student to come here. What your requirement for the host institution, like assessment, like contract, and also we should have like a binding contract or something, agreement or something (IP9, Vietnam).

Clearly stated expectations guarded against a *tourist mentality* (IP8, India) among students, and the tendencies of some universities from the Global North to “... *only want to send their students to India and not be bothered about playing host to Indian students and faculty*” (IP5, India). An illustrating example of the importance of formalised expectations was provided by the participant from the Philippines.

We will not – we did have like a request from one school in Europe, I forget right now and all they wanted was a student to come in but they were not interested in the student having to meet any particular requirements and so we turned it down. We said, “No, we can’t take that kind of exchange.” This is not just allowing a space for somebody to come in and kind of have their third world experience (IP2, Philippines).

By bringing their goals and objectives to the table and by safeguarding their position when needed, the participants had, despite the underlying power imbalance, been able to establish what was seen as a satisfactory level of reciprocity. Reciprocity was understood as integral to maintaining an equal relationship.

Now that must be a situation where both parties in the exchange relationship responding adequately to the needs of both. Which is very important – why?

Because without that the relationship has no meaning and sooner or later it will break up (IP8, India).

In the below quote, the participant from Thailand discusses the financial strain the exchange programs placed on their organisation. Here, reciprocity was a double-edged sword. In striving for an equal and friendly relationship, and in recognition of the benefits visiting professors could bring with them, the participant feels that they cannot ask for additional financial support from their partnered sending university.

I am quite happy to supervise and help them to organise the placement for the student because I think it's kind of equal relationship and also we are friends. So we didn't need to have any request because of friendship, we didn't make any questions. If they want to send their student here, okay we can help you, we don't need to ask for the money but in terms of – but asking another area as well because like they come here to help us as visiting professor and some like because they help each other, we have a long-term relationship (IP3, Thailand)

Later this participant describes how they help finance student placement by using their own private funds; *So, I didn't have any budget actually, I pay by myself to support them some time, but I appreciate to help them (IP3, Thailand).* It is possible that the perceived value of the exchange program in making accessible skills, knowledge, and opportunities that cannot be gained elsewhere, can place host organisations in a disadvantaged position where costs and time commitments beyond available resources are accepted.

Discussion

The findings of this paper clearly show that host institutions recognise and value the benefits from international student exchanges. While host organisations were largely unable

to finance exchange experiences in Australia, reciprocity could nonetheless be achieved as hosting duties were “traded” for other benefits associated with the programs. These benefits align with many of the goals of the exchange initiatives and reflect those identified in the existing literature such as capacity building, cross-cultural competency, increased international profile and reputability (Rowan et al., 2015; Tiessen et al., 2018).

However, the findings also highlight an imbalance that exists within exchange relationships between sending institutions and host institutions. From the perspectives of the host institutions this imbalance was perceived as multidimensional, including: differential access to financial resources; the management of visiting students’ cultural experiences; and, a lack of interest in Indigenous knowledge and skills. This imbalance brought about situations where some participants felt that they had to safeguard their interests to ensure that they were able to access the above stated benefits.

The one-way flow of students from the Global North to the Global South found in this study and in others (Australian Institute for Mobility Overseas, 2012) represents a complex problem that is reflective of broader, global, socio-economic dynamics. The development of clear and formalised sets of aims and expectations, which take account of both sender and host goals and capacities, were seen by the participants as fundamental to the development of more equal and reciprocal relationships. Even though previous authors have argued that such agreed sets of expectations are often conceptualised as key indicators of “partnerships”, the notion of partnership may itself be based on assumptions of equality in an exchange relationship (Kreitzer & Wilson, 2010; Deepak, 2012). Alternatively, a commitment to “solidarity” rather than partnership, may provide a foundation to more equitable relationships between sending and host organisations, where both work as allies to identify and address power imbalances and issues of joint concern (Kreitzer & Wilson, 2010; Deepak, 2012). This includes developing a common understanding of each organisations’ goals and providing

sufficient resources for the planning and implementation of an exchange. This may be of particular relevance when the hosting duties that are “traded” for other benefits represents a substantial drain on the host organisation.

The need to build a deeper and more accurate understanding of host context is important for equitable exchange relationships (Ouma & Dimaras, 2013). Such understanding is more likely to develop from authentic relationships that are built over time (Tiessen et al., 2018). In particular, such processes might be characterised by: relationships nurtured before, during and after an exchange; by a commitment to a two-way flow of exchange; and, through focused language training (Tiessen et al., 2018). For example, this may include the involvement of “sensitive academics who respect native Asian cultures and have critical appreciation of social frameworks in Asia” (Nikku & Pulla, 2014, p. 382).

The burden of managing visiting students’ intercultural experiences has been recognised previously, with Alphonse (2008) discussing the epistemological disruption that occurs for students when they experience different constructions of, and responses to, local manifestations of social phenomena such as domestic violence, confidentiality and privacy, and marginalised groups. As this disruption occurs during the experience, the challenge of assisting students to work through this can often fall to hosts. Participants in the current study highlighted that independent, self-sufficient, and culturally sensitive students greatly eased the burden of support on the host institutions. Well prepared students who cultivate curiosity and are able to understand and respect different worldviews make a significant positive difference to the exchange experience (Jönsson & Flem, 2018; Lloyd et al., 2015) for all parties.

Alleviating—or at least minimising—this inequitable expectation on host institutions speaks directly to the responsibility of sending institutions to adequately prepare students for

international exchange. Critically oriented preparation can improve the exchange experience for both hosts and students, through building a sense of openness to others' world views, and understanding the impact of dominant global forces and our own roles in perpetuating or challenging the status quo (Alphonse, 2008; Razack, 2009; Tiessen et al., 2018). Razack (2009, p. 10) cautions educators to be aware of students' "readiness to be receptive" to critical preparation that not only challenges the dominance of Western theories, but also raises awareness of privilege, paternalism, and unintentional imperialism. The burden on host institutions may also be alleviated by ensuring that students' debriefing and critical reflection is managed by sending institutions. Previous findings show that cultural awareness training is provided by 79% of Australian schools of social work. Extending cultural training to all schools that are engaged in exchange programs may further help lessen the burden on host organisations. For instance, skilled and culturally sensitive staff from the sending institution could accompany students, particularly on short-term exchanges (approximately three to six weeks), or provisions could be made for students on longer-term exchanges (typically a full semester, 13 weeks) to connect back to their host institutions on a regular and as-needed basis.

There is also a fundamental disparity in the understanding of what is actually being exchanged during these international student experiences. Hosts described an imbalance, reflective of the privileged status of Western knowledge, whereby host institutions provided exposure to cultural experiences in exchange for the "dominant" model of social work from the Global North (Haug, 2005). The assumption that underpins such an unequal exchange is that the cultural experience is the only valuable contribution that hosts have to offer, and they must depend on the importation of professional knowledge from the Global North in order to develop social work within their country. Addressing this aspect of inequitable, asymmetrical exchange processes will require sending institutions to reflect on the privileging of Western

knowledge and to deconstruct imperialist and neo-colonialist attitudes and assumptions. In practice this may involve explicitly acknowledging in exchange agreements that both parties have relevant knowledge, skills and cultural contributions to make, and that each has much to learn from the other. Recognition of this issue also points to a need to address such attitudes in student preparation for travel, where students need to be encouraged to let go of the idea that what they have been learning in their own institution represents the best, or only, approach to practicing social work (Ranz & Langer, 2018). When the objectives of the exchange include sharing knowledge in both directions, then progress towards equity and reciprocity can be made.

Strengths and Limitations

The aim of this paper was to add the perspective of host organisations from the Global North, a perspective that has been conspicuously lacking in research that examines international student exchanges. While the experiences of host institutions in the Global South are an essential addition, this aim precluded the examination of activities undertaken by the sending organisations prior, during, and after exchanges. Particularly, the current study did not explore how the experiences of the hosts were linked to the philosophical and practical approaches to exchange programs at their respective host organisations. Such examinations could add further examples of how different types of relationships have different impacts on host organisations.

Conclusion and Future Research

Through the *Going Places* research project, international exchange hosts have made it clear that they value and appreciate the benefits that can flow from exchange initiatives. However, they also identify that such exchanges are often imbalanced and underpinned by Global North-South inequities. Their experiences point to the need for sending institutions to

develop a much deeper and accurate understanding of and a willingness to alleviate the additional burden placed in host universities. Going forward it is difficult to predict the shape of international student exchange post COVID-19. It is likely that some relationships have weakened during this period with no student exchanges currently being undertaken and the likelihood of their resumption in 2021 uncertain. The findings of this research can contribute to continued research and efforts among Australian exchange program co-ordinators toward a mutually beneficial approach to international student exchange. One such avenue could be to further examine the nature of existing cultural preparation that students undergo prior to exchange and its effectiveness in negotiating challenging intercultural experiences while on exchange. Examination of sending and host organisation dyads may also add further knowledge to the field.

Acknowledgements

This research was funded by an Australian Office for Learning and Teaching Innovation and Development Grant (ID14-37210).

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Table 1

Overview of Participants

Participant ID	Country	Data collection method	Organisation
IP1	Cambodia	Phone interview	NGO, social welfare
IP2	Philippines	Phone interview	Higher education – Catholic college
IP3	Thailand	Phone interview	Higher education – public university
IP4	Fiji	Written response	Higher education – public research university
IP5	India	Phone interview	Higher education – public university
IP6	India	Phone interview	Higher education – Christian college
IP7	India	Phone interview	Higher education – Catholic college
IP8	India	Phone interview	Higher education – public research university
IP9	Vietnam	Phone interview	Higher education – public university
IP10	Philippines	Written response	Higher education – public research university