



ASIA SAVVY

NEW ZEALAND ASIA CONFERENCE 2014

**Be successful in the Asian century:
Challenges for the millennial generation**



NEW ZEALAND
ASIA INSTITUTE

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND



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The concept of Asia Savvy: New Zealand Asia Conference 2014

I am delighted to present this year's Asia Savvy Conference e-book under the theme of "Be successful in the Asian century: Challenges for the millennial generation". As a nation of 4.5 million people, New Zealand's competitive advantage largely lies in maximising our internal diversity to develop symbiotic ties with the Asia-Pacific region. We believe developing an understanding of Asia and honing inter-cultural competencies among youth is imperative to ensure continued social, economic and political engagement with Asia.

The Asia Savvy Committee seeks to provide a conference that will enhance understanding of New Zealand's dynamic ties with Asia, while inspiring students to understand their critical role in fostering this important relationship. We aspire to develop a shared vision

for New Zealand's future engagement with Asia by including a diverse range of students and speakers in this conference. By providing an opportunity for like-minded students to learn from industry, academic and non-profit leaders, Asia Savvy aims to continue its journey as one of New Zealand's most visible student-led university conferences.

We challenge you to take advantage of opportunities for engaged discussion and debate on the critical issues and meaningful pursuits that will define our generation's relationship with Asia. As future leaders and change-makers, we hope this year's conference equips you with the knowledge and relationships to maximise your contribution to New Zealand business and society as an Asia-savvy graduate.

Sarah Shier
Project Manager
Asia Savvy 2014 Committee



The Asia Savvy 2014 Committee, from left: Ted Chen, Dinah Towle, Sarah Shier, Sid Jotsingani, Harriet Zhang and Jimmy Yao (absent Richard Phillips).



Conference programme Saturday 30 August 2014

Be successful in the Asian century: Challenges for the millennial generation

Opening addresses

Dr Natasha Hamilton-Hart

Director, Southeast Asia Studies Centre,
New Zealand Asia Institute, The University of Auckland

Sarah Shier

Project Manager, Asia Savvy 2014 Committee

Keynote speech

Fran O'Sullivan

NZ Inc and The New Zealand Herald

Panel discussion 1: Understanding (and misunderstanding) Asia

Charles Chow	New Zealand Asia Institute
Lynn Lai	New Zealand Treasury
Chris Henderson	Cognition Education
Harriet Zhang	Student Moderator, Asia Savvy 2014 Committee

Panel Discussion 2: Connecting and engaging with Asia

Simon Young	syENGAGE
Camellia Yang	Air New Zealand
Jessica Rowe	3 News
Ted Chen	Student Moderator, Asia Savvy 2014 Committee

Panel Discussion 3: Working in Asia

Bert Maerten	Oxfam New Zealand
Craig Pettigrew	The Better Drinks Co
Carol Cheng	PwC
Sarah Shier	Student Moderator, Asia Savvy 2014 Committee

Be successful in the Asian century: Challenges for the millennial generation

The 2014 student-led Asia Savvy conference, supported by New Zealand Asia Institute, was held at the University of Auckland Business School on Saturday 30 August 2014. Approximately 80 participants attended the one-day conference featuring ten invited speakers. The speakers were Fran O'Sullivan from NZ Inc and The New Zealand Herald; Charles Chow from the New Zealand Asia Institute; Lynn Lai from the New Zealand Treasury; Chris Henderson from Cognition Education; Simon Young from syENGAGE; Camellia Yang from Air New Zealand; Jessica Rowe from 3 News; Bert Maerten from Oxfam New Zealand; Craig Pettigrew from The Better Drinks Co; and Carol Cheng from PwC.



Summary of presentations

Keynote speech

Fran O'Sullivan, a prominent columnist for the New Zealand Herald and the managing director of NZ Inc, focused her keynote speech on Kiwis' business engagement with top markets in Asia and other regions. Fran stated candidly that "Asia is where

we are and where our future lies". She noted the importance of China to New Zealand trade and economics, and argued against xenophobic fears about Chinese investments. Yet she also reminded conference participants that "China is not the only story in Asia", and urged them not to overlook other fast-growing markets in the vibrant region. Fran's observations were echoed and extended by the nine other invited speakers at the conference.



Panel discussion 1

Charles Chow, an Asia Adviser at the NZ Asia Institute, focused his talk on building knowledge-based perspectives of Asia. Citing gravely incorrect business forecasts of Asian countries by Western media in recent years, he rebuked the prevailing, oversimplified assumption of “universal” values applicable to all regions. Charles emphasised the historical roots of Asian social institutions and economic practices. When dealing with Asia, he added, one should also remember its size and diversity and avoid “the blind men and the elephant” errors.

Lynn Lai, an analyst from the New Zealand Treasury, discussed how New Zealand might improve the effectiveness of its engagement with Asia to expand its trade volume and varieties, and better its trade to GDP ratio. She highlighted three “lessons” for Kiwi business to consider when thinking of increasing their offshore presence. The first was that no one approach would fit all markets. The second was to value and leverage the socio-cultural diversity of New Zealand by creating a work environment where different perspectives were encouraged and heard. Finally, while Asia was the “region of opportunities”, it was also becoming more crowded. The increasingly intense competition for Asian market shares required the government,

businesses and wider communities to put their heads together and make educated decisions on where in Asia to focus New Zealand’s attention and resources. In her opinion, Asian New Zealanders could join in this effort by participating in the dialogue and making their voices heard.

Furthering the discussion, Chris Henderson, a consultant from Cognition Education, stressed the importance of Kiwis becoming “culturally competent” in their interactions with Asians. He particularly warned against relying on pre-constructed knowledge of the region and its peoples. Drawing on his 15 years of working and living in Southeast Asia, he insisted that an understanding of Asia should not be built only on “authoritative” Western representations of the region. Chris cited Joshua Oppenheimer’s documentary film *The Art of Killing* and Elizabeth Pisani’s book *Indonesia, Etc: Exploring the Improbable Nation*, arguing that works like these, while prominent in the discourse on the archipelago, painted only a partial picture of the largest Southeast Asian country. In other words, while Indonesia had indeed been battling with daunting domestic problems and was often ranked among the lowest in OECD’s economic surveys, it had consistently received good marks in the same organisation’s optimism/happiness indices.



Panel discussion 2

Simon Young, the CEO of marketing consultancy syENGAGE and co-author of *Social Media MBA*, shared with the audience his experiences in using Chinese micro-blogging websites Weibo and WeChat to amass fans and followers in China for his and other interested New Zealand companies since 2007. He noted that social media engagement not only helped his business, but also enabled him to learn about Chinese culture and society and even the difficult language in a fun and hands-on way. Simon enjoyed the experiences so much he recorded them and attendant tips in an evolving e-book, *Mandarin for Lazy Learners: A Taste*, which people could sign up for and interact with. He noted that the “learning” was never one-dimensional as when networking with Chinese micro-bloggers, he found himself constantly researching New Zealand and looking for ways to present it visually to satisfy their curiosity and answer their questions.

Camellia Yang, a Social Media Specialist for Air New Zealand, conveyed a similar message. She called for special attention to the fact that mobile internet users in China had already exceeded 500 million; Weibo’s monthly active users totalled 158 million; and that Fonterra, Air New Zealand and former Prime Minister

Helen Clark all had Weibo accounts. To tailor its brand to the Chinese market, Air New Zealand was also on WeChat, Douban and Youku, and adjusted its promotion activities according to Chinese holidays. Camellia closed her talk with the commonly quoted projection that the Chinese millennium generation would become the world’s largest consumer group in 2020, ie. 300 million. New Zealand businesses should get ready to tap into it.

Jessica Rowe, a 3 News producer, worked at China Central Television in Beijing as an international news editor for a year before taking up her current position. Her OE in China gave her an opportunity to experience first-hand “business deals at dinner tables”, “business cards on hand all the time”, and “gift giving etiquette”. As important as these established social norms and practices might be, however, having some basic proficiency in the Chinese language would help foreigners more in making friends and building trust with the locals, Jessica said. With regard to Chinese social media platforms, Jessica maintained that WeChat was still new, and although the micro-blogging site was becoming more popular among Chinese companies, it remained a challenge for foreign firms to use the media to drive their business in China.



Panel discussion 3

Bert Maerten, Oxfam New Zealand’s International Programme Director, briefed the audience on those in Southeast Asia who were living so close to the subsistence line that technological advances were beyond their reach. He applauded the massive economic growth achieved by most countries in the region and their efforts to reduce poverty, yet he was also sharply critical of their worsening “development exclusion” and widening income disparities. In carrying out Oxfam projects in Southeast Asia, Bert saw time and again the harsh reality that the higher the degree of social stratification and inequality in a country, the greater its vulnerability to economic crises and natural disasters, and the longer it would take for its people to rebuild their lives. At a more personal level, undertaking Oxfam assignments to open up spaces for social justice in Southeast Asia also changed his way of looking at the world.

Craig Pettigrew, who leads the international branch of The Better Drinks Co (formerly Charlie’s), is perhaps one of very few “Japan hands” in New Zealand. Fluent in both spoken and written Japanese, he worked as a bar tender when pursuing his tertiary education in Japan. He later worked for Tourism New Zealand in Osaka and then for New Zealand Trade and Enterprise in Tokyo. Today, his portfolio at The Better Drinks Co includes 25 countries, many of which are in Asia. When addressing the Asia Savvy au-

dience, Craig reiterated the message of the conference that the region was a fascinating and exciting mix of customs, traditions, beliefs and practices. To minimise “lost-in-translation” pitfalls in an Asian culture, you should be patient, pay attention to the context, “join the dots” through making friends and building trust, and then proceed to business negotiations.

The final speaker for the conference, Carol Cheng, is an Executive Director in China Market Practice of PwC New Zealand. She has worked with more than a hundred foreign companies that are doing or intend to do business in China. She touched upon a question likely lingering in the minds of most conference participants – how to get a job you love in Asia. She suggested studying smartly and strategically when in school. This could include learning an Asian language, and starting it early. It could also mean building links with companies and trade associations with an established business presence in Asia. With the labour market getting more competitive, university graduates should try to focus on “working for experience” at an entry-level job,, which might prove a crucial platform to springboard from later, Carol advised. Finally, she reminded the audience that not only work environments, but also work ethics, could vary from culture to culture. A typical example was that “working hard” in Hong Kong, China and Japan often meant valuing work more than personal life.

Student discussions and recommendations

Each panel discussion was followed by a workshop for students moderated by Harriet Zhang, Ted Chen and Sarah Shier. During these workshops students put forward their ideas and recommendations relating to the relevant panel discussion. A summary of these recommendations follows:

Panel discussion 1: Understanding (and misunderstanding) Asia

How can we improve our understanding of Asia?

The image of countries in the region of Asia can be misunderstood and portrayed as a “one size fits all” stereotype and is often presented in a very outdated way.

It is important to recognise that modern Asia is made up of a diverse range of countries, with diverse cultures, values and socio-political systems. At the same time, many countries in Asia have recently gone through rapid modernisation in a way unknown to us in New Zealand.

To build successful relationships with Asian counterparts in Asia or in New Zealand, we need to learn about these differences to avoid cultural misunderstandings.

This learning has to be sustained by a strong desire and a concerted effort to understand the history and modern-day workings of Asian countries and cultures. Individuals can explore options through education, travel and student exchanges. These need to be bolstered by government-led initiatives that promote understanding.

Panel discussion 2: Connecting and engaging with Asia

What does it take to be “e-savvy” in Asia?

The increasing emphasis on social media networking in Asia is driven by a desire for convenience, speed and low cost, and by its ability to have a broad reach. Social media also provides a forum for people to have a voice which otherwise might be censored. Local and international companies can effectively tap into potential markets using social media tools.

However New Zealanders need to adapt their ways of connecting to take into account the economic, social, cultural and political differences if they are successfully to make use of social media in Asian countries. All countries have their own specific nuances of language. Social media needs to be tailored accordingly if it is to be seen as genuine and therefore effective.

To be “e-savvy” in Asia requires:

- Connecting on a human level to create and maintain networks
- Having an on-the-ground presence to pick up trends
- Targeting regions strategically
- Understanding cultural differences





Panel discussion 3: Working in Asia

What are the pathways to working in Asia? What are the challenges and opportunities? What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a New Zealander in Asia? How can you prepare to work in Asia while you are still in New Zealand?

There are many avenues available for those seeking to further their chances of working in Asia. These include actively seeking networking opportunities with academic, business and community organisations and through social media; learning foreign languages; working as an intern; higher education; and, importantly, having a genuine interest in Asia.

Some of the challenges include:

- Language barrier
- Culture shock
- Difficult working conditions (eg. long hours)
- Tough competition

However, working overseas provides students with opportunities to take part in growing markets, further their careers and boost personal growth.

Despite the fact that New Zealand may not be very well known in some of the larger markets, it does have a reputation as being “clean and green” and culturally diverse. The New Zealand Government has good relationships with many Asian countries. These positive factors can be seen as useful for New Zealanders working in Asia. On the other hand, New Zealand may be viewed as insular in its outlook, given its geographical isolation.

To enhance a working experience in Asia, students need actively to buy into the culture and carry out their own research using as many pathways as possible.

Selected student essays

What are the advantages and disadvantages of working in Asia as a modern graduate?

*By Ankit Aggarwal
The University of Auckland*

Where on earth do we have 60 percent of the world's current human population whose two largest and most populous countries are living on a land barely larger than the US? Yes you have guessed it right! We are talking about "Asia" – the largest and the most populous continent on earth. Asia in itself comprises of some 47 economies and out of those 47, the largest economies in Asia are China, Japan, India, South Korea and Indonesia. In order to guide the discussion, I will be basing my views/opinions on the essay in question by using the aforementioned largest economies in Asia.

Being Indian, I can explicitly state that working in Asia is not child's play and one needs to possess requisite skills and experience in order to advance his or her corporate career. David and Jocelyn (2009) in their article on Asian demographic change and economic growth asserted that working age population will slow down in the Asian region. Even though they predict high economic growth in the economies like China, South Korea, Japan and Indonesia, they also assert that the decline in the working age population will create detrimental effect on the economic growth rate of the aforementioned high growth economies in the Asian region. With European markets getting saturated and American markets trying to revive from the economic downturn, I believe Asian economies have a lot to offer the modern graduates.

High growth economies like China, South Korea, Japan and Indonesia can provide plentiful job opportunities to a modern graduate seeking to start his or her career in their dream industry because not only will the graduate(s) be interacting with the

people from diverse cultures and contributing to the working age population, they will also be learning about the Asian culture which comprises a significant percentage of the world's population (same goes for India as well, though it doesn't show as high growth economy in David and Jocelyn's article in the Asian Economic Policy Review, 2009). Another advantage for a modern graduate to work in the largest economies of the Asian region is to learn about the varied processes and technological developments with the help of outsourcing activities done by some of the big multinational corporations in order to save on their costs.

The two limitations of working in Asia as a modern graduate are the language barrier and the relationship-based working style, as for a modern graduate from outside the Asian region, say for example New Zealand, he or she might face language issues mainly in the economies like China, South Korea, Japan and Indonesia but will not face the same issue in India because one of India's official languages is English. Also the same modern graduate from New Zealand might face issues in adopting relationship-based working style because generally in Western countries or Pacific countries it's a deal-based working style which a person is used to so by adopting a long-term relationship building approach, a modern graduate can survive and sustain themselves in Asia.

I believe with my article a modern graduate will gain an insightful understanding of the pros and cons of working in Asia mainly in the five largest economies of the Asian region.

How can we improve understanding of Asia?

*By Sharifah Azzahra
The University of Auckland*

Asia is the largest and most populous continent in the world, indicating that it consists of a variety of cultures, diversities and values. Understanding Asia demands engagement of oneself into the authenticity of this continent and its people. China and India are predicted to be the world's top economies in 2040 and Asian countries' influence on the world is increasing, thus there is a lot to learn from this continent.

Globalisation transformed almost every economic activity in every country, as the principles of comparative advantage and free trade won universal acceptance after the breakdown of command economy. The economic principles of specialisation began to operate effectively across the world. The result was, of course, an upsurge of productivity growth, especially in China and other previously backward Asian countries. There are two main ways to improve the understanding of the world focusing on the 21st Century's generation, as they are the future leaders.

The first is through education – formal and informal. Implementing an “Asia literacy” concept into the education system, especially in secondary schools, will show how Asia has impressed the world with its economic development. As an example, in Malaysia the education system aims to not only develop knowledge and skills but to foster each student's personality, moral development and critical thinking. In Asia from primary right up to University level, students have the opportunity to gain valuable cross-cultural experience and develop a strong appreciation of global issues alongside Asian values. India has grown rapidly, Japan was the second largest economy before China took over and it has been a major economic concentration for the world as it offers cheap labour and developed infrastructure. Development on the perspective of Asia empowers students to work hard, respect diversity in culture, appreciate diversity and recognise the moral values.

In Malaysia, the Ministry of Education encourages and subsidises international study trips as it is a real-life learning experience, exposing students to the education system, culture and expertise that the country has to offer. Visiting schools, factories and meeting influential icons from respective fields opens up a new dimension in their way of thinking, generates ideas and increases communication skills and confidence. Management skills are put into practice on an international level, hence economic and peace through understanding could be built.

Asian countries, especially Malaysia, South Korea, Japan and Vietnam, promote homestay programmes. Students who immerse themselves with the locals through homestay programmes will open up a new dimension in critical thinking as they are open to the new world and able to witness and feel the development, people and culture of that nation. On the other hand, the visiting as well as the host country both benefit from such a valuable experience. Through education and visiting, one will be able to feel, judge and absorb the learning and thus contribute back to the world. Asia is a rich continent and exploring it is always beneficial.

Understanding would develop by exchanging ideas, and it would be a great opportunity to share ideas concentrating on energy and conservation. Engagement through green conferences will allow Asia and New Zealand to explore each other's expertise in preserving the world. New Zealand is well known for its expertise in energy consumption while Asian countries are famous for preserving their forest and wild animals, such as turtles and orangutans. An example would be The Low Carbon Green Growth Expo taking place between 21-24 October, one of the biggest exhibitions in South Korea organised by the Korea Green Foundation. Exchanging expertise in a significant platform will innovate ideas for future engagement that benefit both regions.



Seminars and debate should also be emphasised. Japan, China and Singapore are among the major countries that develop their own organisation culture to empower and motivate their employees. Fast forward to today, Asia has become the world's great hope for growth and most Asian equity markets are now trading at significant premium to Western and Middle East markets. For example, Malaysia halal production promotions. Non-government organisation conferences to share values, such as the International Conference on Humanities, Society and Culture in Kuala Lumpur on 2 September 2014, could definitely improve our understanding of Asia's people and culture.

As the paradigm is shifting and the world is moving from market economy into the new world order, evaluating the changes and Asia's response can enhance the understanding of Asia, and particularly its economy. The changes might benefit other regions, thus it is crucial to evaluate and understand Asia as a growing economy in order to study its influence on the other nations. Discussion and intellectual discourse has been seen as a significant platform in developing and engaging understanding on a higher level. Being critical in evaluating and presenting it back as contribution could be one of the best methods in improving understanding of Asian to other regions.

Finally, we can improve the understanding of Asia through politics and leadership.

The more the country gets involved with Asian activities, accepting Asian immigrants and allowing Asian globalisation, the more it will understand and be aware of Asia. The TPPA for example has highlighted to the world the importance of Asian countries. The issues regarding Malaysia, Japan and China have caught many people's attention for judgment. Several Asian leaders have been seen as icons, showcasing some of the larger-than-life historical figures who have influenced the history of Asia and the world as a whole. From fierce warlords such as Genghis Khan and Timur (Tamerlane) to non-violent leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Aung San Suu Kyi, outstanding personalities have changed the course of Asian history over the centuries.

Leadership exchange and economic co-operation between countries will uplift the understanding of Asia to the world. Asian leaders need to be bolder in expressing feelings and opinions in order to make sure that the world is listening and understanding.

To me, Tun Mahathir is always my icon. He has always been an outspoken critic of the United States and yet the United States was the main importer, exporter and FDI in Malaysia. Among most developing and Islamic countries, Mahathir is generally respected, particularly for Malaysia's relatively high economic growth, multi-racial unity, as well as for his strong support for Islamic nations, especially Palestine.

Foreign leaders, such as Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev, have been trying to emulate Mahathir's developmental formula. He was a brave leader, one of the greatest spokesmen on Third World issues, ASEAN, the G77, the Non-Aligned Movement, the TPPA and GST which will be implemented in Malaysia soon, also the most recent incident of the MH370 where there was a special TV coverage -an interview with Tun and his views.

In conclusion, Asia has been highlighted lately in many fields as it has captured the attention of the world in terms of political stability, people unity and economic development. Understanding Asia will give great benefits, impact and ideas in predicting the future. There is a lot to learn from this continent and nothing should be left behind while discovering it.

Propose an innovative idea to foster stronger engagement between Asia and New Zealand

*By Eve Bain
Victoria University*

Stronger engagement between countries and cultures is not something that can be imposed from above. There must be the political will to move in a particular direction, high-level strategic vision to position one country closer to another, but engagement is only meaningful when it permeates all sections of a society.

To foster stronger engagement between New Zealand and Asia, there needs to be more opportunities for exchange between the highly motivated young leaders of the respective regions. We have meetings between our Prime Minister and the heads of state of various countries throughout Asia. We have secondments and professional-level exchanges between government departments and multinational companies that operate in both New Zealand in Asia. We have student exchanges, however these focus solely on academic study, and international students – whether it is New Zealanders in Asia or students on exchange in Aotearoa – tend to struggle to fully integrate into their adopted university community. There is a gap in the level of exchange between various youth organisations, which are only growing more ambitious in their goals and more professional in their operation.

Allow me to illustrate my point with an example a bit closer to home. I am extensively involved in a student-led educational NGO called UN Youth New Zealand. We run conferences that reach thousands of students across the country, send delegations overseas and deal with important stakeholders and large budgets. Being a volunteer for UN Youth is not only rewarding, it is an intensive professional development experience. UN Youth Australia is significantly larger and was established ten years earlier than the New Zealand equivalent. We have recently started exchanges between our volunteers, where a senior UN Youth member will attend a UN Youth Australia forum and student conference, and then report back on their experiences. Through this process we learn from the mistakes UN Youth Australia has made in the past,

and share our best practices and vision for the future. This enables both our organisations to grow and for strong connections to be forged across the Tasman, an instantly strong link because it is based on a shared passion for Model UN.

A similar initiative between New Zealand and Asian youth organisations would be immensely valuable. Increasingly, youth-led organisations are resembling professional operations. These student groups are national-wide initiatives, involving huge levels of planning and human resources, which make concrete contributions to society. There should be an opportunity for New Zealand leaders in youth organisations to go on an exchange to a youth organisation in Asia, and vice versa. This will draw on the rationale of the technical assistance and expertise sharing from the Colombo Plan, where people with the skills and knowledge train local actors. The impact of these exchanges would lend itself more readily to measurement, more so than the broadly defined “cultural understanding” that is the aim of short-term study abroad. The replication of a system or event from an Asian youth club in New Zealand following an exchange would be easy to see. The logic behind professional secondments should be applied to the dynamic world of youth organisations.

Such an initiative would result in strong engagement between the individual students who directly participated, as they will have a shared passion. It would also result in sustainable links between the two organisations as a whole. An exchange programme between leading volunteers in our youth organisations would connect the movers and shakers from our respective countries and enable both sides to learn about how we can run our organisations differently and more productively. The passion and drive present among our youth leaders would trump any cultural and language barriers. Such an initiative would contribute to strong engagement in this critical segment of our societies.

How can we improve our understanding of Asia?

By Akshat Chugh

The University of Auckland

As a nation, we are no longer living in isolation. Sure, it might be worth a chuckle to be reminded of our name only in association with Peter Jackson and the All Blacks, yet it is no longer a position held for the majority to be reflective of.

We are New Zealanders, yet we are also global citizens. Our heritage, culture, language and identity all form as one to strengthen our increasing dependency in this globalised world. At the heart of this issue, the relationship between New Zealand and Asia exists as an opportunity. Indeed, we assess this opportunity as one to be utilised and therefore, our understanding can be improved by education. We have realised the strength of this through overseas exchanges, sport exchange programmes and of course through the influx of Asian students coming to New Zealand universities to study. Where we can congratulate this movement on its merits, opportunity only exists between the youth to gain a larger networking sphere and to capitalise on greater educational opportunities through teaching languages, exchanging viewpoints and cultural methodologies to solve everyday problems and building a bond to reflect New Zealand's increasing position in the global sphere.

Such is an idea, which is not foreign to me. I have seen the acceptance and tolerance of two cultures in my earlier high school days with a large international student population from Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Malaysia among just a few of the Asian countries. There is much to mutually benefit through the recognition of two cultures. Barriers between two cultures only gives rise to an indifference that can be taken for granted. These barriers need to be eradicated for growth.

My proposal thus stems to create an online network comprising of participants from both New Zealand and the various countries in Asia to exchange information and serve as a platform for sharing educational resources. Such a platform can give users the ability to meet others specialising in particular fields or areas of expertise or interest such as Law, Science, Education, Engineering or the Arts and exchange strategies to adapt and integrate to their own personal learning in the future. As New Zealanders, there is undeniably an attitude of respect for the hard work ethic

and effectiveness of those in Asian countries.

On the other hand, the attractiveness of New Zealand as a potential partner in trade and commerce by nations such as China and Japan has given witness to a huge area of opportunity to current graduates for further interests in employment. Mentorship, leadership, education and diversity reflecting acceptance and tolerance bring together methods I believe are of increasing value to each and every individual. We encounter problems and many of these problems do not solve themselves with the same mind-sets that we once valued through systematic learning. Traditional practices, even in the context of education, are now being revolutionised. Learning has evolved from the classroom to online platforms where ideas from each segment of the world are being combined.

The internet has given youth the opportunity that many could even vaguely shape together as an ideal. And yet, it is a reminder each day that the attractiveness of a formal education, achieved from continuous study at an educational institution such as a University, is now increasingly being overlooked by many employers in the marketplace as the single determinant to employability. We need to network. We need to exchange ideas.

We need to be present to have our voice heard and to hear criticism. The demands are overwhelming, yet rather than basking in the difficulty of such a goal, the response is to work on a solution to indeed strengthen a bond between New Zealand and Asia to apply these principles into practice. It is a long-term goal, yet one that can give rise to greater than expect benefits on its behalf for inter-generations to follow and develop.

Thus, to think of a quick solution to exceed the minimum word limit of 300 words of the ever so challenge of improving our understanding of Asia only brings together ideas and viewpoints that challenge preconceived notions of keeping our neighbours outside of our own borders.

We have come a long way from being the nation of solace and milk and honey. We have an increasing role in foreign affairs, commerce and the ever so shaping of the identity of a global citizen. It is time to realise the value of our potential partnership with Asia. Be heard.

Propose an innovative idea to foster stronger engagement between Asia and New Zealand

By Kevin Huh

The University of Auckland

New Zealand has one key advantage when it comes to our engagement with Asia. New Zealand already has within our lands a diverse range of immigrants who were born in Asia who came during the 90s and to the present time. Today, we are now seeing the 1.5 and second generation of Asian New Zealanders entering tertiary education and/or the work force. I believe this presence of Asians within our land is a vital key to enhancing our engagement with Asia.

Our Kiwi Asians have been noted to assimilate well into the New Zealand society, however, there have been significant numbers returning to their Asian homelands. These return migrants are holders of New Zealand citizenship and have often seen success in education, excellent English skill and have other valuable skills. Many of these returning Kiwi Asians are from China, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan. These nations are among our top trading partners. This return migration is problematic

as it results in losing skilled workers in New Zealand. Many of these returned migrants are working in these Asian countries as English teachers or for foreign firms or local companies. I believe we can utilise these return migrants to enhance our relationship with these Asian nations.

New Zealand can do more to engage with these return migrants by providing a path for the exchange of goods and services of New Zealand. Our international businesses could recruit and form branches within these Asian nations using our already existing skilled Kiwi Asian work force. Perhaps the best way to implement this would be to recruit Kiwi Asians while already here in New Zealand and provide opportunities for work within their homelands. This will save companies from losing valuable employees and having highly skilled bilingual employees to promote New Zealand products and services.



How can we improve our understanding of Asia?

By Sophia Seo

Victoria University/ University of Leeds

It is evident, although not always discussed, that New Zealand lacks the necessary language skills for the future. This is in part because of the status English has as the language of international business and communication, and a predominant view that it is not 'us' who need to adapt to the way of others, but 'others' who need to adapt to our Anglophone culture and language.

It is easy to fall into such a train of thought but it is a dangerous one. The world is changing rapidly and New Zealand is part of a global society which relies heavily on trade with various countries, many of which identify as Asian. Three of New Zealand's top five trading partners are China, Japan and South Korea.

Our future depends on the strength of the ties we have with our neighbours and these ties can only become stronger if we have a better understanding of each other. While learning history and undertaking cultural exchange is important, I believe fostering a comprehensive understanding of Asia can only come through mastering Asian languages.

This is because underlying all languages is a way of thought. Expressions, words and characters tell us much about a country, its customs, history and values. Honorifics and the idea of hierarchy which are particularly prevalent in Asian languages cannot be translated in the same way into English. These have implications for cross communication, respect and understanding. There are also special phrases such as the four character Chinese proverbs which act as pearls of wisdom that transcends its physical boundaries. These phrases are currently used in Japan and Korea and tell us much about the historic and cultural influence China has had on these countries. Once again, one can learn much about cultural ties and history through language.

Thus it is important for there to be better education in these languages as well as an awareness of why it is important to learn them. Young people will continue not taking other languages seriously if they believe that speaking English is sufficient for business, travel and enjoyment of popular culture.

While key Asian languages are being taught in schools, New Zealand is far off in developing its citizens' competence in the numbers to reap significant cultural and economic benefits.

Often those who do have skills in an Asian language are New Zealanders of an Asian ethnic and cultural background. What New Zealand lacks is not the resource, because comparative to countries such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand has a high number of individuals who understand Asia. Rather, what New Zealand lacks is making use of its resources.

Policy makers, diaspora communities and minorities have a role in ensuring these groups' languages and cultural skills remain used in the education system and for business purposes. The Government needs to develop education policies and priorities relating to language. The way forward is by providing incentives for young people to learn other languages. Programmes which encourage students to study in Asian countries such as the Prime Minister's scholarships are a positive step forward, but the real change needs to come from within our own communities in New Zealand.

There is a need to value non-English languages which will continue to be important due to New Zealand's ever growing dependence on trade with its Asian partners. New Zealand has all the resources and the capacity, what we really need to change is our attitude and our willpower.

How can we improve our understanding of Asia?

By Caitlin Smart

The University of Auckland

The 'tiger mum' is one of the most endearing Asian stereotypes of our generation. First popularised in Amy Chua's memoir, 'Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother', the 'tiger mum' is a self-sacrificing, incredibly forceful guardian, in contrast with the stereotype of the Western mother who does not care about her child's wellbeing, only her own pleasure. Stereotypes can be incredibly hurtful, but they also contain a grain of truth. The differences between 'Asian' parenting and 'Western' parenting lead to different mentalities and different ways of interpersonal communication, which can lead to drastic differences in how mental health is seen and treated in predominantly Asian and predominantly Western communities.

One example of this is the how the high school examination systems can create increased anxiety and depression in Asian students. In many Asian societies, a well-paying career is largely due to the prestige of the university a student attended. Therefore, the focus is on doing well in final high school exams in order to be accepted into a prestigious university. In contrast, within Western society, university grades and non-academic experience are much more important when it comes to gaining a career, so that less emphasis is placed on high school exams. Furthermore, Confucian values on 'upholding the norm' mean that many

young people within Asian communities are reluctant to seek treatment, for fear of being abnormal.

In contrast, individuals are more likely to be diagnosed with social anxiety in Western cultures than in Asian cultures. Western cultures tend to value loud, forthright individuals who are willing to take on aggressive individuals. This is in complete contrast to the personalities of those with social anxiety, and therefore those in Western communities who do have some form of social anxiety are viewed in a negative light. On the other hand, due to the same Confucian social view of 'upholding the norm', dominant individuals do not receive as much praise. Consequentially, there is very little, if any negative, stigma on being reclusive and quiet, and there is less pressure to become an extrovert.

The field of mental health is complex and wide-ranging, with all practitioners navigating the best integrated approach of anthropological and biological treatments to help patients to live fulfilling lives. However, if we are to truly utilise our knowledge of anthropological medicine, we must continue to examine the similarities and differences in Asian and Western communities to identify both positive and negative factors on individual's respective mental health.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of working in Asia as a modern graduate?

*By Jennifer Tate
The University of Auckland*

Asia is a difficult but rewarding marketplace to enter as a commerce and languages student. As compared to a country such as New Zealand, the markets are much bigger, much more diverse and infinitely more complicated. As is the case in every market, networks created are fundamental for finding successful opportunities and job openings. Tools often used in New Zealand to seek out potential employees, such as websites with job openings are much harder to use when there are enormous response rates to every job. Due to the aforementioned market characteristics, working in Asia as a modern graduate has both advantages and disadvantages. This essay will focus on China as compared with New Zealand, as these countries are the ones I know the most about.

As a Kiwi-European who studies Chinese language and has some understanding of the culture, an advantage of working in China is the willingness of employers to give you an opportunity, which is immense. Simply upon seeing you, and realising you do not look ethnically Asian, they are much more willing to hire you on appearance. This gives you an advantage to prove yourself worthy in skill, so long as you already have a 'foot in the door' from your perceived 'difference'. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage, however, as being a novelty is useful for getting hired, but could be very frustrating if your future employer refuses to take you seriously.

The fact that there are many applicants for any jobs means that there will be both competition that could drive down the wages, as well as less security, where you could be replaced at any moment by many willing applicants. This is obviously a disadvantage that is not quite so distinct in New Zealand due to the much

smaller job market. The wages could also be unfairly lowered (and indeed there is no legal minimum wage, so wages are likely to already be quite low due to the comparatively low cost of living), so it is perhaps best to be employed by a multinational, then transfer to a Chinese office, in order to ensure you are paid a wage that will be enough to survive if you return to your home country. Of course, for a Chinese-only company, you may have to accept low wages as a trade-off for experience, it all depends on your job goals.

The fact that part-time work does not truly exist in China is another disadvantage, coming from a much more flexible, work-life balance focused marketplace in New Zealand. "Dagong", a kind of temporary work, is the closest language equivalent, but for the most part, this is full-time work, but for a set period of time, rather than reduced hours in a given week. This could be strenuous, as free time is generally considered very important for personal development in the Western world, and particularly important if you want to soak up the rich traditional culture of China.

The main point to take from this over-simplified and subjective analysis of advantages and disadvantages is definitely the huge differences in work ethic and general culture between China and New Zealand. This will be the main influence on how successful you will be in the Asian market, depending on whether you are willing to work within a hugely different set of rules, or whether you prefer to stay in the New Zealand comfort zone, in which case you will have to find a company with New Zealand rules that operates in an Asian market place.



How can we improve our understanding of Asia?

By Cindy Yuan

The University of Auckland

Even though New Zealand is part of the Asia-Pacific area that people refer to, Asia is still a part of the world that is distant and mysterious to most of New Zealanders. It is mysterious not only because of the 12-hour flight distance, but also because of its entirely unique history and culture.

As someone who grew up in China, and who has lived in New Zealand for almost a decade, I have come to comprehend just how different things can be – a show of modesty may be interpreted as a lack of confidence, an intimate friendly gesture maybe seen as overstepping the boundary of privacy.

New Zealand society nowadays surely has grown to be more tolerant of these differences, and in the meantime, more and more second-generation Asian immigrants have shown just how capable they are of keeping up with both sides of their cultural background.

Yet still, the occasional frown and confused looks are still there, so just how can we improve society's understanding of Asia?

The first key point would be to neutralise the media's perception and grounds on news and reports regarding Asia. The reason being that the media, as the fourth branch of power in most democratic countries, usually holds the key to shaping foreign countries' images. They can choose to be selective with the con-

tent of their reports, and because of that, they have the weapon to hurt or build their people's perception of a country, and this is not only limited to mainstream television or newspaper media, it would include social media, commentaries and tabloids. Too often we have seen the media showing signs of selectivism and bias in dealing with foreign news, especially when it comes to something in Asia which they cannot fully comprehend. Media has widespread effects in all countries, and if they are able to keep themselves neutral and stick to a professional standards on all matters, it will be a great help to keep misperceptions such as "all Chinese eat dogs" or "all Asians are good at maths" at bay.

The second key point would be for our country to build a stronger communication between our students and students in Asia. There should be more exchange and volunteer opportunities, making the interchange of culture much easier. Also there should be more conferences or programmes like Asia Savvy where students from both backgrounds can come and share their views.

The younger generation tend to be more open minded about different cultures, and can be more adaptive to them as well; as they are often referred to being the hope of one country's future, it is reasonable to expect that the better understanding they have about Asia, the better understanding New Zealand will have about Asia.



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