

Chapter 2

Tourist, Tour Guide, Traveller, Travel Agent? Reflections on Leading and Learning from International Professional Experiences

Ange Fitzgerald

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:

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Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

(Frost 1916)

Robert Frost beautifully captures the notion of journey in his poem, shared above, *The Road Not Taken*. It prompts the reader to think about not any old journey, but one where a conscious decision about which path to follow needs to be made, with one option continuing on into the familiar and the other veering into the unknown. As this poem brings the metaphor that lies within this chapter to the fore, it segues into the experiences that will be shared and made sense of throughout this narrative.

The beginning of 2015 signalled the start of a journey for me, which involved overseeing the International Professional Experience (IPE) Program in the Faculty of Education at Monash University. The decision to embark on this journey was made at a crossroads period in my life and was to involve not only navigating a road less travelled but a path not yet trodden. A new role in the Faculty that required bringing together several existing international learning opportunities, and adding several new ones with a focus on moving from individual ventures to a programmatic approach, including formalizing the processes and procedures that would support such a move. This was, of course, in some ways exciting and energizing and in others daunting and overwhelming. I wasn't to know then what I now know two years down that unmade track, but my choice to venture into the unknown has made all the difference. It has presented me with opportunities that I would never had imagined, along with challenges that I didn't want to imagine; it has enabled me to grow both personally and professionally as well as to reflect on things that I could have done better. And importantly, it has impacted on student learning and their experience as a student of teacher education. It can be hard to put a finger on exactly what is different now, compared to when I first embarked on the IPE journey, but it is something that I do feel and recognize. As I continue to beat my way through the undergrowth, I am mindful that a new crossroad is about to present itself, requiring another decision. This will inevitably involve veering down a different road, but this time, I am presented with one that is not quite so unmade.

Given this timing and opportunity, it seems right to reflect on and make sense of my experiences leading and learning from the IPE Program these past two years. While the metaphor of a journey may be overused, it seems appropriate in this instance, given the nature of the work I have been engaged in, to continue down this narrative path. Though this is not to suggest simplicity—a straightforward moving from A to B. This journey has been one of twists and unexpected turns; it has been complicated at times and wrought with complexities. It has been a role that has meant different things to different people at different times. I have grappled with it as I have moved in and out of different spaces and contexts, always coming back to a key question—who am I in this space? Again, while an oft-used lens, notions of border crossing (Aikenhead 1996) seem appropriate here as a frame for navigating this experience and for shining a light on why and how this is challenging work. For Aikenhead (1996), border crossing refers to the cultures and subcultures that we

negotiate and move between as we navigate our worlds. Sometimes these crossings are straightforward because the context is familiar, and we are able to adapt and apply what we know to make sense of the experience. But sometimes the crossings can be challenging because the context, its ways of being and of making sense of the world, is completely different and perhaps even at odds with our own world views. Continuing on through this chapter, various aspects of the border-crossing paradigm will be drawn upon as well as my own reflective stories to make sense of the different identities that evolved and emerged, which I adopted and moved between, during my involvement with the IPE Program.

Prologue: A Starting Point

February 2015

5am. A brisk winter morning in Rome hits me in the face as I drag my cheap, and increasingly less compliant, suitcase towards the departures hall. I start to question my decision to skip a coffee before embarking on this next adventure. Good Italian coffee too. When hindsight kicks in, I will definitely have regrets. I have only been back at Monash, and in this new role as the IPE liaison, for less than a month with most of that time spent in Prato supporting our pre-service teachers on placement in local schools. What an energizing time that has been! The pre-service teachers who participate in the IPE program really inspire me. It is hard to put my finger on exactly what it is, but partly it is the ways in which they tackle the challenging times they face in and out of the classroom, and partly the confidence they take away from successfully navigating learning and teaching in a different cultural context. But as I stride into the Fiumicino Airport, this experience is already fading into the background. This has been the familiar aspect of this new position, having supported students in the Cook Islands over two years a few years back now, and now looking ahead to the unfamiliar. A series of firsts awaits. Setting up a new IPE in a new country with new partners that I haven't met yet. Strangely enough, I don't have a sense of being overwhelmed or concerned about what lay ahead, more excited and focused. I wonder if this is because this seems like a homecoming of sorts. This new IPE will be based in Israel and only two months earlier I was coming to the end of a two-year stint volunteering and living in neighbouring Jordan. As I pass through the sliding doors and into the warmth of the building, thoughts of the past and the future dissolve as I am quickly pulled aside by the Israeli border control (Israeli citizens based in Italy) charged with doing their job. Having negotiated several border crossings into Israel in the not so distant past, I was expecting this encounter, but not before my feet had left Italian soil. I knew I was in for a lengthy discussion, but I wasn't expecting it to go for over an hour. I was aware I would be asked a lot of questions, but I didn't expect to be fact checked. I was up for being challenged, but I wasn't expecting to have my suitcase emptied and each item scrutinized. Expectations. You know what they say about expectations? None of this might seem relevant or important on the surface, but after recovering from the initial confrontational aspects of this interaction, it seemed to me that there was something particularly prescient about this moment. Racing through check-in, security, immigration and boarding, I slump in my seat. Coffee regrets sneaking in. Sitting and thinking, wishing I could replay that incident and observe myself. It seemed like I was calm on the outside and accommodating of all requests, but I was definitely experiencing some turbulence within and my mind was whizzing to process the

next move. Border crossings? Expect the unexpected. Be ready to be a shape shifter. Moving between different roles and requirements. Think on your feet. This experience of border crossing, physically and metaphorically, was sending me a message about what lay ahead. It was saying something about who I am and what I will be in this space, but in that moment it wasn't entirely clear. Not yet.

Who Am I?

This experience of an actual border crossing sparks in me a series of memories about what it is like to negotiate this space, which in this day and age essentially is about interactions with immigration officials, and it strikes me as interesting for a couple of reasons. Firstly, there is the preparation that goes on before hand to be ready for the experience from the prosaic (e.g. finding your passport, completing forms) to the more problematic (e.g. seeking a visa, contemplating the line of questioning) to the personal (e.g. staying calm, being organized). This leads to the second point, which is a certain level of perceptiveness you may bring to an experience, as you enter into and pass through this space. This might present itself in considering how to read the moment (e.g. making sense of body language and gestures) and then how to respond (e.g. to speak or not to speak). The reflection above captures a particularly turbulent experience of negotiating a border crossing, but I have a whole spectrum of interactions to draw upon. These range from a lively five minute discussion with an the immigration official in Norway about his time in Australia as a young man, wanting to chat before he would stamp my passport, to the detached robotic persona I seem to adopt as I file past most immigration check points across the world. Each border crossing requires in and from me particular levels of preparation and perceptiveness.

Therein lies the complexity. To successfully negotiate a border crossing, there is a requirement to know about or be aware of having to respond differently to different circumstances. There is something within this need for responsiveness that I find fascinating—how do we as individuals navigate this space so that we emerge unscathed and successful, and what does this mean in terms of who we are? This is why Aikenhead's extensive work on cultural border crossing, and the body of research that has stemmed from it, resonates with me. As a science educator, I first came across this work in relation to students' navigating between different ways of understanding science phenomenon. This involves moving between everyday interactions with science, which are often culturally embedded, and the ways in which science is depicted and disseminated in school, which is often through a Western lens. Scaling this up from the specific to the more general, as we move through our lives, we come across a mesh of cultures and subcultures (Jegede and Aikenhead 1999) that we may be more or less familiar with, that we need to interact with and navigate. What emerges through the literature in this field is that regardless of the context, we generally start to develop strategies that enable us to move

between different ways of being and doing, to enable us to operate effectively, more or less, in these different spaces. These metaphorical border crossings can take place numerous times on a daily basis. ‘Generally’ and ‘more or less’ become important words/phrases here because how well we fare in our border crossings depends on a range of factors, such as the dominant culture, our own cultural backgrounds and the process of enculturation we have, or have not, been involved in.

With the inherent challenges in cultural border crossings, it is not surprising that searching questions, like *who am I* and *how do I position myself in this space*, might be lurking close to the surface. However, in the border-crossing circumstances that I find myself in, raising questions of such an existential nature might seem just plain dramatic. But based on my recent experiences, it is this search for a sense of identity that I would like to explore. The multifaceted nature of overseeing an initiative such as the IPE Program has caused me to consider the different spaces that I work within and across as well as the different meanings my role, and by association myself, hold for the different stakeholders. It has become apparent to me that having the ability to take on different ways of being that best meet the needs of a situation, and being able to move fluidly between these spaces, is critical to how effective I am at navigating and negotiating the border areas of my work. In drawing again on my involvement in science learning and teaching, it has been interesting to ponder the notion that success in science education depends on teachers helping students to mediate cultural borders and to engage in some form of negotiated learning (Jegede and Aikenhead 1999). The metaphor ‘teacher as culture broker’ was first used by Stairs (1995) to make sense of a teacher’s role in resolving cultural conflicts. For example, a science teacher who is a culture broker will guide their students in the act of border crossing between their everyday culture and the culture of science, helping them resolve any conflicts that may arise. Aikenhead (1996) conceptualized culture brokers in two ways as being like a *tour guide* or a *travel agent* with those doing the border crossing imagined as *tourists* or *travellers*. *Tour guide* teachers support students who require a high degree of guidance when border crossing, just like *tourists* in a foreign country on a guided tour. *Travel agent* teachers support students who require much less guidance when border crossing, just like world *travellers* in a foreign country making their own way around. These roles are not considered as dichotomies, but rather the differences being considered as a matter of degrees along a spectrum.

From tour guide to travel agent, tourist to traveller—what does conceptualizing who I am, and how I engage with border crossing in these ways, offer in terms of how I make sense of my experiences? To start with, it captures my imagination. At different times in the past two years, I can clearly envisage myself operating in each of these roles—as both border crosser and culture broker—and taking on the relevant identities to assist me in finding my way. So in using these four roles as a framework, I will now explore who I am in the IPE Program, and what that has meant for my work in this space from these perspectives.

Tourist: Me as Learner

June 2015

I did harbour nerves about travelling to India for the first time. India is one of those places – you love it or you hate it. At least that's what I had heard. While I'm at ease in moving outside of my comfort zone and enjoy a challenge, there was something slightly daunting about taking on this challenge with nine others, who you are meant to be supporting, watching on. About a week before departure, we were all squashed around a table in a tiny Indian restaurant in suburban Melbourne and enjoyed a laugh or two over a curry. While we were waiting for more naan bread, I started a discussion with the group about what they were most looking forward to in terms of this experience as well as what we were most anxious about. One by one, we moved around the table. The vibe was one of general excitement about the country and the different ways of thinking about and being in education that this experience would open up, followed by anxiousness about exactly the same things. I essentially felt the same way. I was most excited about this incredible personal and professional opportunity for the students, but, with a different twist, I was anxious about how I would manage myself while managing them. Managing is probably not quite the right word, but the sense of what I meant resonated. We will all be learners in this new space, navigating it together. If I am deeply culture shocked and you are all deeply culture shocked, how does this play out as we try to forge our way, side-by-side, through this experience?

This notion of tourist in the cultural border-crossing analogy is usually reserved for those needing a significant amount of support to negotiate and navigate an unfamiliar space (Aikenhead 1996). It is focused on the border crossers rather than the culture brokers. In relation to this narrative, the role of tourist could typically be allocated to many of the students who participate in an IPE. It characterizes their interactions in a new cultural context inside and out of a classroom setting, which are often tentative and uncertain. While I agree with this notion generally, my experiences suggest that there is a need to broaden our understandings of who constitutes a tourist, and when. For me, a tourist is someone who is a very much a learner, though that is not to suggest that the other three roles (tour guide, traveller and travel agent) explored in this chapter do not involve some level of learning too. There is a sense to the concept of tourist that you are at an entry level or venturing into a space for the first time. While my role had me positioned as a culture broker, my work in India found me personally in uncharted territory. Finding myself in this situation resulted in me positioning myself as a learner, and certainly as someone who was very much a tourist in this context.

The duality captured in this example—of being a border crosser while supporting border crossers—highlights the complexities inherent in this role, as well as raising a number of implications. As a culture broker, you need to find a level of comfort in acknowledging your tourist status before seeking avenues of support to help guide you in this space. Not positioning myself as the knowledgeable expert but instead as a co-learner alongside my students made sense to me and was ultimately something that led to a richer experience. There was significant benefit in being honest about not knowing all the answers, or fully understanding what the experience would be like, by instead demonstrating an ability to be open to

whatever presented itself and willing to solve problems as they arose. Perhaps I was acting as a role model, in a sense, for how a tourist might act and respond in this cultural context. Taking a co-learner approach also had a neutralizing influence, as the responsibility and pressure of having to know or organize everything did not fall to one person but was instead shared across the group, which ultimately spread the sense of ownership over the experience. While my anxieties about managing the group and myself in India did not amount to anything serious, it is interesting to ponder what the impact of not smoothly transiting this crossing might be.

Tour Guide: Me as Teacher

January 2016

At first I thought I must be a slow learner. Every time I worked alongside a group of students on IPE I seemed to stumble across an approach and/or strategies that were better or more effective in supporting their learning and growth in a new cultural context. Whenever this happened, it was one of those moments where you want to slap your forehead and exclaim - *why didn't I think of doing that before?! This time, with the group in Sharjah, I finally felt like our approach to our weekly formal debriefing sessions was really working.* By really working, I mean it was generating rich professional discussions, insights about identity and place in education, and incredibly thoughtful reflections about learning and teaching in a different, and often challenging, cultural context. The conditions also seemed to be more nurturing – smaller groups, couple of set questions, weekly changes to the dynamic, more focus on drawing on their journaling to inform the conversation. Going back to my initial thought (being a slow learner!), I stood back and considered this more. Of course, we get better at things with time. That is the learning process. But this was not just about learning, it was about teaching too. It was about me engaging with this experience as a teacher/facilitator and responding to the needs of the students as well as the context, not only based on what had happened in the past but what was happening in the current situation as it unfolded. I was bringing a particular level of awareness and responsiveness to orchestrate a positive learning experience.

Some time ago, Phelan et al. (1991) proposed a model for understanding the multiple worlds that students moved between, which helped in making sense of the ways they experienced their border-crossing transit. Their data uncovered four types of transitions, which are still relevant to current ways of thinking about border crossings: smooth, managed, hazardous and impossible (Phelan et al. 1991). Congruence between the worlds to be traversed supports a *smooth* transition, whereas differences between the worlds, no matter how subtle, require transitions to be *managed*. When the worlds to be transited between are diverse, this can lead to a *hazardous* transition, while highly discordant worlds cause a resistance to transit, leading to an experience which is virtually impossible to manage. To enable a smooth transit between everyday and new cultural experiences, the requirements of a border crossing must be made explicit. Explicit, in the sense, that there is an understanding of the ways of being and acting in that space that are acknowledged as appropriate and acceptable. The role of a tour guide (e.g. teacher) is to assist in helping to make these cross-border transitions accessible to tourists (e.g. students).

The notion of being a culture broker re-emerges here, characterized as resolving cultural conflicts as they arise.

In the reflection shared above, my role as a teacher focused on providing the students with ways to make sense of their classroom experiences in a different cultural context by identifying the learning taking place, the problems they were encountering and the possible impacts on their future. It is worth considering the multifaceted nature of the transition inherent in the IPE Program. In that, the border experiences of students are not only positioned in the classroom, but in terms of their journeys into the general cultural milieu of a location as well. To navigate these spaces, students are involved in extensive briefing sessions prior to departure, which start to prepare them for what lay ahead. Particularly useful in these sessions is inviting past participating students to speak about their lived experiences of an IPE and how they managed the challenges they faced. However, there are many aspects of supporting students that take place in situ and are responsive to their needs in that moment. This highlights that even within one location, different students can experience border crossing in varied ways, ranging from smooth to virtually impossible and an individual might even move between these different states (e.g. managed to hazardous) depending on what they face. What arises from these understandings is an important consideration about how to support students in these situations, that is, how to be a tour guide/teacher. It is certainly not a one size fits all approach or a matter of being didactic in telling what needs to happen when to smoothly traverse this experience. It is more about drawing on a diverse range of strategies and resources in ways that are known to be appropriate or useful for that particular cultural context.

Traveller: Me as Individual

February 2016

Anyone who does this kind of work greets the question – how was your holiday? – on their return to the office with a wry smile. Natural instinct is to blurt out it was no holiday, more like school camp but lately I have been working at keeping those words in my mouth. It is not that I think that we shouldn't talk about the nature of this work and highlight its complexities, challenges and rewards; we absolutely should. I also think that someone who asks a question like that probably doesn't get what these experiences are trying to achieve! But I don't want to overplay that this experience is all work, and that I don't get some kind of personal enjoyment and growth out of spending time in another country. Of the places I visit, Israel holds a special place in my heart mainly because of my strong ties to this region. As I roam the streets of Haifa, I greatly value being able to interact with Arabic-speaking Israelis in their native tongue, no matter how hashed it may be, and feel very lucky to be able to benefit from the surprise and the warmth these interactions bring. The man at the end of the street always sneaks me a couple of freshly cooked falafel as I wander past, and I like to think that is because I reached out too, wanting to connect. The woman at the nearby sheesha coffee shop waves me away when I try to pay for my evening hot chocolate. No, we are friends, she says, I don't take money from a friend. Her name is Ibtisam, which means smile in Arabic, so I do then merge back into the night. But this is not just about

having a shared spoken language. I am fortunate enough to have stories from around the world of connections like these. It is enough to *ibtisam*/smile, a universal tool of communication, and keep my heart and mind open.

Somewhat different to the tourist is the traveller. In the cultural border-crossing analogy, the traveller refers to someone who needs much less guidance and support as they transit in and out of new territory (Aikenhead 1996). They are more autonomous and capable of negotiating different cultural spaces, but benefit from the insights of, and being challenged to think differently by, someone in a facilitator-like role. Like the tourist, the traveller has traditionally been allocated to border crossers rather than culture brokers. In relation to this narrative, me adopting the role of traveller may seem self-indulgent and perhaps unnecessary. Not to justify my own exploring, but being able to engage in my own cultural learning, and to gain lived experience in transiting different cultural spaces, seems critical in terms of how I can ultimately prepare myself to better support students throughout an IPE. As a traveller, I am able to draw on my own experiences to share relevant stories to assist others in reflecting on their transits, as well as make better informed decisions related to what might be considered appropriate or acceptable in a particular context. Given this role involves working with partners and service providers in different locations, having some locally based knowledge and experiences is useful in fostering positive relationships.

Again, in identifying as a traveller, the complexity of occupying multiple roles in this space is apparent. While honing my own abilities in smoothly transiting between different cultural spaces—countries, communities and classrooms—I am conscious of being present to help manage the transits of others, both students and local partners. In contrast to being a tourist, the traveller should bring a certain level of capability and confidence to this work. In adopting this role, there is still the notion of co-learning, but there is also an ability to engage with a different cultural context on a deeper level, and to pay attention to the nuances inherent in that context. There is a sense of moving from the bigger picture, which may initially involve survival and getting by, to finer details, such as immersion and getting involved. The implications of these complexities are embedded in the importance that is placed on honing a particular set of skills and gaining a range of experiences. Unlike the tourist, being a traveller involves a certain level of willingness to share and critically reflect on the border-crossing mistakes and blunders made to further the learning of others.

Travel Agent: Me as Leader

Ongoing, 2015-2016

It can be hard to not get caught up by and sucked into the drama that can be part of an IPE. Although, it seems to be human nature to want to know the warts and all stories – what happened to whom and what did we do about it? - it is like the notion of the train wreck. We don't want to look, but we can't look away. And sure, there have been a number of

incidents and accidents in the last couple of years that I could and do share. For me, however, there are some subtle differences in telling versus communicating the successes and challenges of an IPE. Perhaps what is lost in the telling, but captured in the communicating, is the sense of learning from the experience, the grappling for answers and the problem solving about what could be done differently. Communication has certainly been an important component in my role as a leader. In some ways I feel like a centre point from which the program pivots, in and out, to and from students, their families, my colleagues and our partners across the world. Inward and outward-facing in our education community. An extra head to think things through, a set of ears actively listening, a set of eyes on the look out for possibilities and pitfalls, and a voice for which to communicate and advocate for the needs and concerns of all involved. My experiences leading and supporting the IPE program have required me to move beyond getting caught up in the telling of the stories, to not overly invest in the drama and the hype, and instead engage in open and honest communication. Being aware of a shift from telling the stories to communicating the messages. In acknowledging this, I genuinely experienced a change in how I view myself as a leader, from simply moving through a number of tasks in a more reactive way, to participating in a way that involves a more critical appraisal of what is happening, why and how to respond.

Travel agents, such as tour leaders, support the navigation and negotiation of border crossers, but their focus is usually on travellers rather than tourists. As mentioned earlier, transitions from a culture or subculture to another requires managing. One way of enabling a smooth passage is through the development of academic bridges (Aikenhead 1996). An academic bridge is constructed from multiple perspectives (e.g. historical, sociological, social issues) and plays an important role in helping travellers manage their border crossing. This notion of the bridge was encapsulated in Pomeroy's (1994) cross-cultural agenda and is engendered in this quote: 'bridge the world view of students and that of Western science' (p. 63). In the context of the IPE Program, the bridges that we hope to create for students enable them to gain access from their current world views to the different world views and realities of new cultural and classrooms settings. It is important to acknowledge that the intention in bridge building is not of enculturation or assimilation into the characteristics or norms of another culture, but instead acculturation. This may seem like a subtle shift, but acculturation is a process of modification and adaption to accommodate different ways of being rather than acquisition. This distinction is important because it highlights finding ways to fit in, while maintaining one's own identify.

One aspect of the roles of a travel agent is to provide encouragement for travellers to further their interest and engagement in a topic or issue. Generating a need to know supports their ability to negotiate the border crossings they face as they construct their own ways of being in this new space, and develop ways to articulate and critique their experiences. An important aspect of this leadership position, which is alluded to in the story shared above, is the interchange between being a travel agent and a role model. This position is about encouraging all involved to really delve into their border-crossing experiences and to face up to the triumphs along with the challenges. In leading and fostering my own reflective practices and communicating the learning I am engaging in, I am in turn modelling approaches that both students and partners could adopt to support their learning, as we negotiate and navigate these new spaces together. The introduction of this leadership role to

the IPE Program has played an important part in filling what previously was a gap—the provision of a central person to liaise with students, staff and partners. While previous IPEs had been successful, in terms of border-crossing transits, having a key person to turn to makes a significant difference when clarity or support is required.

Making Sense of It All

In revisiting the poem that opens this chapter, Frost hints at the complexities inherent in the decisions we make about the paths we choose to take and the journeys we embark on. They are certainly not always linear or straightforward. My experiences in the past two years certainly attest to this, although it becomes interesting to ponder the added complexities that are apparent when a journey involves the crossing of borders, both actual and metaphorical. Aikenhead's (1996) work provides a useful backdrop for making sense of this navigation and negotiation process by highlighting the work required to move back and forth between different contexts as smoothly as possible. The framing provided by Aikenhead's four constructs—tourist, tour guide, traveller and travel agent—helps to capture and make further sense of the messiness of border crossing. In my involvement in IPE, I was moving back and forth, managing my own experiences as border crosser (tourist and traveller), as well as culture broker (tour guide and travel agent) to support the crossing of others.

As I reflect on the continuous shifting that occurred between my roles of learner and leader, it becomes apparent that this experience was much less about changing myself to manage a situation, and much more about adopting a constantly evolving sense of self. My narratives may give a sense of an evolution of my identity in these border-crossing spaces that is linear or progressive. The reality was, however, that I was required to draw upon aspects of being a learner and a leader all of the time. It was just that different dimensions of these identities were required to emerge, to be foregrounded, at different times for different purposes. The experiences reflected upon in these narratives certainly speak to Kamler and Thomson's (2006) understandings of identity, which suggest that this construct is plural in nature and that multiple identities may form in response to specific contexts and experiences. Of particular interest to this narrative, and the development of my own identity as a learner and a leader of the IPE program, is the notion that identity is not fixed, but always under construction, being made and remade as we live out an experience (Kamler and Thomson 2006).

Framing my experiences using aspects of border crossing proved useful in making sense of the spaces I found myself moving between and within these last two years. But it has left me pondering of what value these insights might be as I approach a new crossroad in my journey. I will be moving into an existing role in the Faculty—Director of Professional Experience (DPE)—which will essentially involve me overseeing and supporting all of our student placements. This will

require negotiating a range of different settings, each with their own culture and ways of being, such as early learning centres, kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools and alternate education settings (e.g. museums, zoos, etc.) situated in urban areas through to regional and rural locations across the state and country. I will be taking up the mantle of leader and learner yet again.

My ponderings have resulted in three key insights. Firstly, border crossings do not exist only in the world of international travel or in cross-cultural partnerships, even though that is the way they have played out in this narrative. This construct equally has a role in local contexts wherever there are spaces that have us moving out of familiar territory into unfamiliar situations or circumstances as my new role will surely attest to. Secondly, taking the time to reflect on these experiences, and becoming aware of the evolving rather than changing nature of how I come to be in different circumstances, has provided me with understandings and a heightened sensitivity to the importance of being responsive to the context. A skill that I hope will hold in me in good stead as I embark on my journey as the DPE. Third and finally, this narrative brings to the fore the complexities inherent not only in border crossing and identity work, but in the development of genuine partnerships. A reality that is a constant grapple in the professional experience space and one that I will become more attuned to as I meander down this new track.

Epilogue: Coming to a Close

October 2016

6.30am. Looking out the window, I can see a brisk morning in Zurich awaits me as the wheels of my plane screech to a halt on the tarmac. A thought flicks through my mind – I should have tried to get some more sleep on this red-eye special. But in a flash it is gone, I will worry about and feel the effects of a long day later. A soundtrack of mooing, tinkling cowbells and distant yodelling greets me as my expensive, ultra slick suitcase glides into the train carriage ahead of me and I am whisked from one airport terminal to another before exiting out into the fresh air. Ready for my reconnaissance trip to Switzerland and the beginnings of a new IPE partnership. Mindful of how many of the students tend to approach travel (casually!), I have done very little to prepare myself in getting from the outskirts of town to the city centre. I want to experience this new location in a similar way to how they might approach it. How easy or hard is this to manage? Without too much hassle, I negotiate buying a ticket for a tram that will take me close to my accommodation. How incredibly straightforward is public transport in Europe? Amazing. Announcements in English alert me to my destination and I jump off the tram only to realize that I actually have no idea which direction to head to find my hotel. North, south, east or west? It's really anyone's guess! A moment of hesitation, but then the situation is quickly rectified by venturing into the nearest hotel and asking for some assistance. How simple are things, in general, in Europe? Fabulous. Hotel found, luggage dumped, search for coffee on. As I sit in the sunshine, outside a café that looks like it belongs in a gingerbread village, my thoughts catch up with me. This will most likely be the last time I am setting up a new IPE in a new country, with new partners that I haven't met yet. My superficial (and somewhat tongue-in-cheek) smugness about flash luggage, easy travelling and cute locales aside, this is a strange feeling to grapple with. It feels even stranger when I consider the experience

that this moment bookends. It is not that these things get easier – that is not the right word – but perhaps it is about a certain level of becoming more comfortable and confident with the process. I feel like I have a sense of knowing what to do when certain circumstances arise or trust that I will know how to react when faced with an unexpected challenge. Maybe this level of reassurance is directly connected with coming to terms with who I am, or who I need to be, in this space. I think in the past two years or so I have developed an in-depth knowledge of how to juggle my multiple identities, and a more nuanced understanding of which version of me needs to be foregrounded and when. In this moment in this new city, as the sun warms my face and my coffee disappears, I can't help but smile and embrace my inner tourist. Or perhaps after all this time, it is traveller? Though you don't have to scratch too far beneath the surface to recognize that the tour guide in me is taking mental notes to share with the students (you need to know a café latte in Zurich is around \$7!). Meanwhile my travel agent self is composing a list of questions to share with our partners in the coming days (where can you find a cheap coffee in this city?!). If only the border work were this simple. This work is messy, tangled and complex, but that is also where the beauty and interest lies. The good things aren't meant to come easy, right?

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