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Aid, education and adventure

**An exploration of the impact of development scholarship schemes on
women's lives**

A Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctorate of Philosophy
in
Development Studies
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Abstract

This thesis examines the outcomes associated with women's participation in development scholarship schemes. These schemes, which provide citizens from Third World countries with opportunities to undertake tertiary training abroad, have featured prominently within the development assistance programmes of many Western nations. However, the longer-term impact of this type of educational experience on the lives and communities of individuals who take up this form of aid remains under-studied. This is particularly the case for female development scholars, who have been both historically excluded from opportunities to take part in these schemes, as well as marginalised within academic evaluations of their outcomes.

This research provides an in-depth qualitative exploration of the experiences of twenty women who have completed a tertiary qualification through a development scholarship scheme. The participant sample is diverse, and includes a group of New Zealand-based female doctoral students who have participated in several of these programmes, as well as two groups of women from Thailand who have returned home after taking part in a scholarship scheme funded by the New Zealand Agency for International Development.

This research identifies a number of positive and negative outcomes for women associated with this distinct type of educational experience. Beneficial outcomes include greater emotional autonomy, increased cross-cultural knowledge, new professional networks, new work skills, and improved English-language competency. Participants within this research report that these benefits have translated into increased respect within their workplaces; new opportunities to represent their organisations at home and abroad; greater participation in international research and policy forums; increased control over negotiations with foreign consultants; and an enhanced commitment to collaboration with other professionals in the ASEAN region.

Negative outcomes to arise out of the scholarship experience include role tension and relationship conflict for married women; career disruption associated with employment bonding and job restructuring during the period of absence abroad; new unwanted work responsibilities; and dissatisfaction with some aspects of quality of life in their country of origin. This thesis provides rich narrative material that increases our understanding of the concrete ways that this form of educational aid is 'lived out' in the lives and communities of female development scholars.

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION	1
INTRODUCTION	1
IMAGINING THE ‘SCHOLARSHIP GIRL’ - PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE.....	1
CHAPTER OUTLINE.....	8
CHAPTER TWO - RESEARCH ON THE EXPERIENCE OF OVERSEAS STUDY: MOVING FROM PATHOLOGY AND ‘CONSUMER’ SATISFACTION’ TO AID AND ‘DEVELOPMENT’	11
INTRODUCTION	11
RESEARCH ON THE LIFE OF THE ‘INTERNATIONAL STUDENT’	11
RESEARCH ON THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN AS INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS	17
<i>Combining family and study</i>	17
<i>Gender and student life</i>	21
<i>Women’s experience of homecoming</i>	24
NEW ZEALAND RESEARCH ON THE EXPERIENCES OF ‘RETURNEES’	27
STUDY ABROAD AS A ‘DEVELOPMENT’ INITIATIVE	35
NEW ZEALAND’S DEVELOPMENT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME	40
CONCLUSION	43
CHAPTER THREE - THE ‘SCHOLARSHIP GIRL’ AND THE MEANING OF EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE: WRITING ON GENDER, HIGHER EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT.....	45
INTRODUCTION	45
EDUCATION FOR REPRODUCTION	46
EDUCATION FOR PRODUCTION	49
EDUCATION FOR SUBMISSION	55
EDUCATION FOR EMPOWERMENT	60
EDUCATION AS EXPERIENCE	63
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	67
CHAPTER FOUR - FEMINIST POST-DEVELOPMENT THOUGHT AND THE CHALLENGES AND PROMISES OF THEORETICAL COLLABORATION	74
INTRODUCTION	74
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES AND THE REPRESENTATIONAL ‘IMPASSE’	74
THE POTENTIAL OF FEMINIST THEORY TO CONTRIBUTE TO NEW DEVELOPMENT IMAGINARIES	78
FROM BLACK FEMINISM TO DECONSTRUCTIONISM	81
THE PARAMETERS OF FEMINIST POST-DEVELOPMENT THOUGHT	87
CONCLUSION	94

CHAPTER FIVE - METHODS	95
INTRODUCTION	95
INTERVIEW RESEARCH AND THE VALUE OF QUALITATIVE EXPLORATIONS OF DEVELOPMENT REALITY	95
BUILDING A RESEARCH FRAMEWORK	100
BACKGROUND PREPARATION FOR RESEARCH	102
SELECTING PARTICIPANTS	105
DEVELOPING THE INTERVIEW GUIDE/QUESTIONS	108
ETHICAL ISSUES ARISING OUT THIS RESEARCH	111
RESEARCH RELIABILITY AND SAMPLING ADEQUACY	113
INTERVIEW ANALYSIS	115
DATA PRESENTATION	116
CONCLUSION	118
STORIES: AN INTRODUCTION.....	120
CHAPTER SIX - RESEARCH IN THAILAND, PART 1.....	122
“NEW ZEALAND LOOKED LIKE AN EXOTIC PLACE FOR THAI STUDENTS TO BE”: HONOUR, ADVENTURE AND AUTONOMY.	122
INTRODUCTION	122
FAH’S STORY	122
<i>Beginnings</i>	123
<i>Coming home</i>	127
<i>Encountering a different culture</i>	127
<i>Cultural integrity</i>	129
<i>Women’s working lives</i>	130
DISCUSSION	132
CONCLUSION	143
CHAPTER SEVEN - RESEARCH IN THAILAND, PART 2	146
“LIKE A FROG IN A COCONUT SHELL”: ADVENTURE, ACCEPTANCE, AND RESILIENCE.	146
INTRODUCTION	146
NOK’S STORY	147
<i>Beginnings</i>	147
<i>The value of the scheme</i>	151
DISCUSSION	152
JOM’S STORY	153
<i>Beginnings</i>	154
<i>Research topic</i>	156

<i>Standing up for yourself</i>	158
DISCUSSION	160
CONCLUSION	173
CHAPTER EIGHT - RESEARCH IN NEW ZEALAND.....	175
“THESE PEOPLE BELONG TO ME, AND I BELONG TO THEM”: COURAGE, COMMUNITY, AND INTERNATIONALISM.....	175
INTRODUCTION	175
AMAL’S STORY	176
<i>Beginnings</i>	177
<i>Coming home</i>	179
<i>Women and courage</i>	180
<i>Thesis life in New Zealand</i>	182
<i>Education and expectation</i>	184
<i>Filling the gap</i>	185
DISCUSSION	186
KRITI’S STORY.....	187
<i>Beginnings</i>	187
<i>Research and pregnancy</i>	190
<i>Second time around</i>	191
DISCUSSION	196
CONCLUSION	208
CHAPTER NINE - DISCUSSION.....	210
INTRODUCTION	210
1) THE NEED TO EXPLORE WOMEN’S OWN INTERPRETATIONS OF THEIR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES	211
2) THE NEED TO PRODUCE ‘HOLISTIC’ EXPLORATIONS OF WOMEN’S EXPERIENCE THAT EXAMINE ALL DIMENSIONS OF THEIR LIVES.....	214
3) THE VALUE OF CONSIDERING BOTH INTRINSIC AND INSTRUMENTALIST ASPECTS OF THE IMPACT OF HIGHER EDUCATION ON WOMEN’S LIVES	217
4) THE NEED TO REMAIN COGNISANT OF THE ROLE OF EDUCATION AS AN INSTITUTION RESPONSIBLE FOR REPRODUCING SOCIAL PRIVILEGE.	224
5) THE IMPORTANCE OF EXPLORING CONFLICT AND NEGOTIATION ASSOCIATED WITH THE SCHOLARSHIP EXPERIENCE	231
HOW DO THESE RESULTS COMPARE TO THE FINDINGS OF PREVIOUS RESEARCHERS?	237
IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH ON NZAID SCHOLARS	240
CONCLUSION	246
CHAPTER TEN – CONCLUSION	248
ENLARGING THE FIELD	249

A FEMINIST POST-DEVELOPMENT APPROACH.....	250
EMPIRICAL EXPLORATION OF THE 'SCHOLARSHIP GIRL' EXPERIENCE	251
OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE	253
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW INFORMATION SHEET, NEW ZEALAND.....	257
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW INFORMATION SHEET, THAILAND.....	259
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM	261
REFERENCES	262