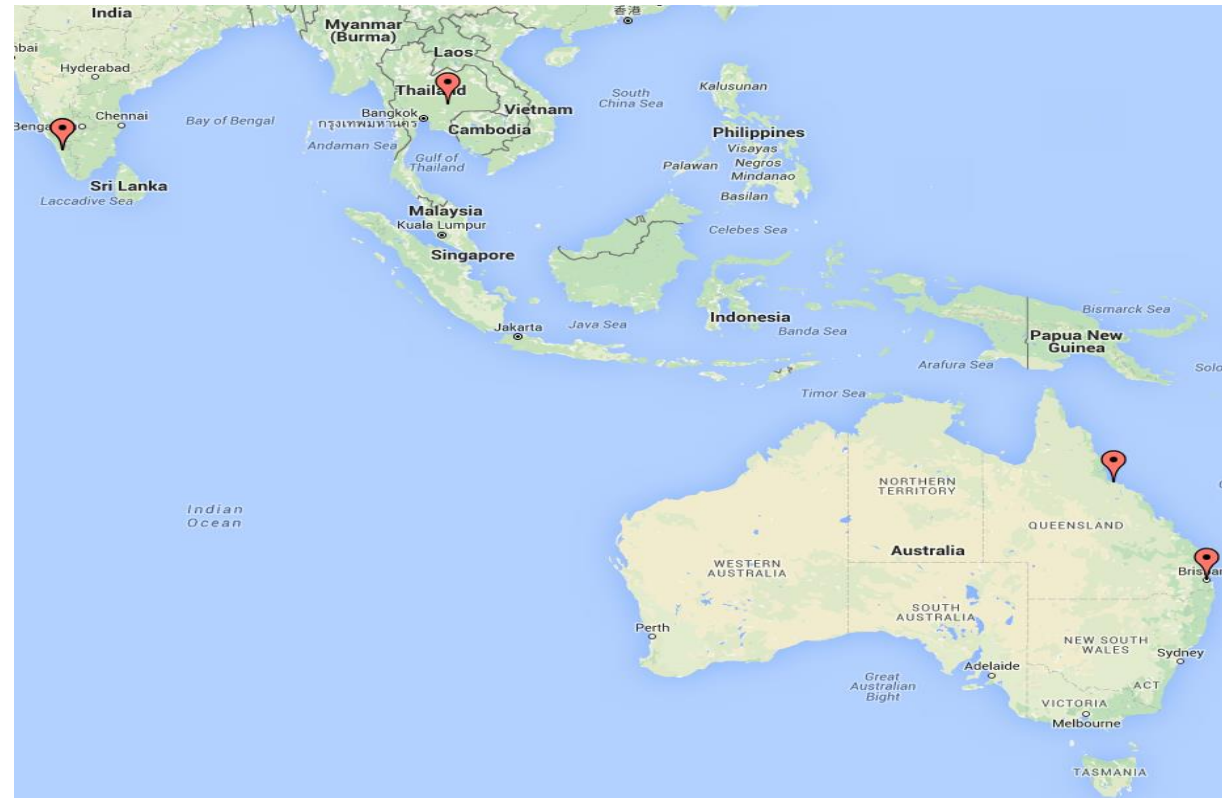# Going places

International social work student exchange: Facilitating good practice, reciprocity, and mutual benefit

Our relationships

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN MENTAL HEALTH
December 2014

International student exchange

- **Student exchange** is a **widespread practice** across Australian schools of social work.

- Lack of **information** about **current practice**, **effective partnerships** and **processes** that facilitate **benefit** for both **sending** and **host** institutions and their **students**.

Workshop structure

Going Places – Seoul Workshop Structure [DRAFT]
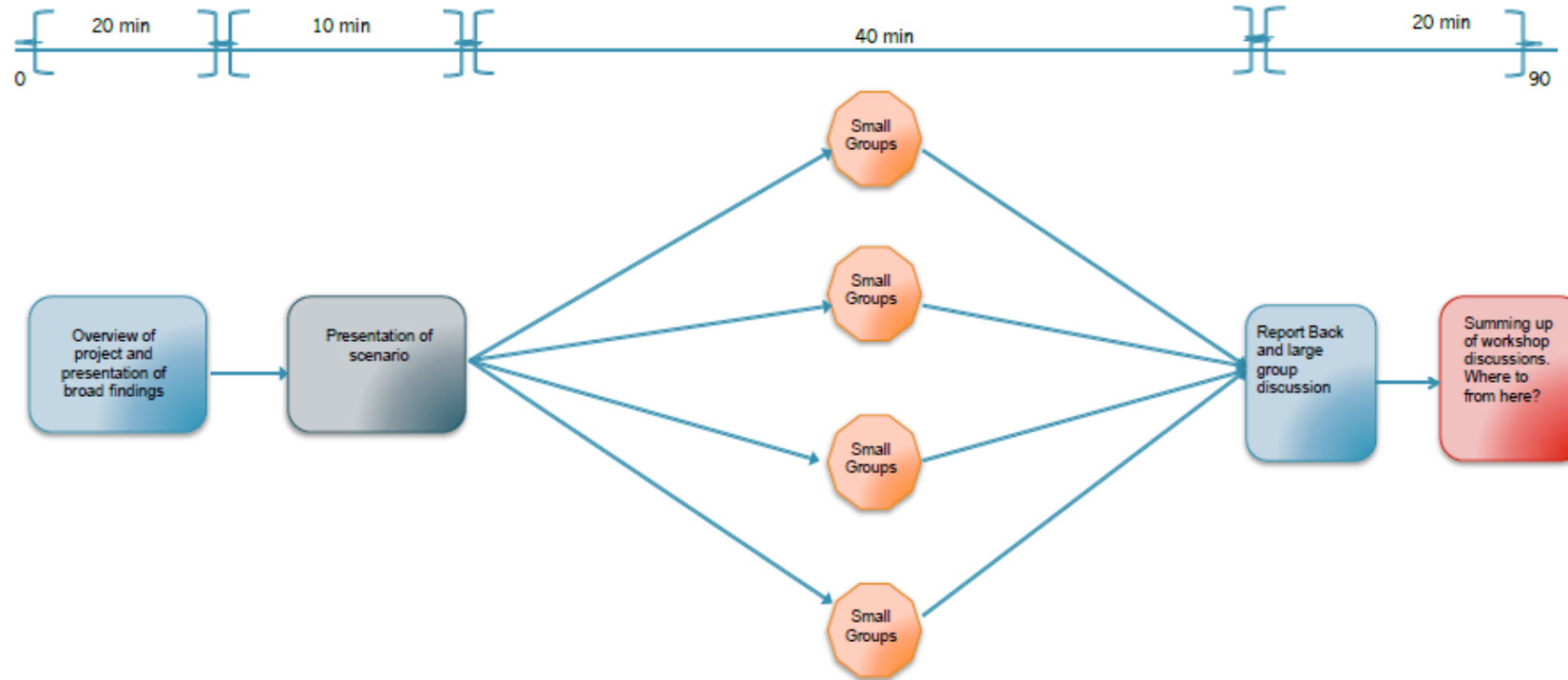
So what have we done so far…

- **Critical literature review**

- **Quantitative Online Survey** with Australian Schools of Social Work

- **Qualitative Interviews** with Australian academics, Host organisation staff and academics, and travelling Australian students

Going places

Literature – benefits

- Great potential for *student learning* and *transformation* (Lough, 2009; Bell & Anscombe, 2012; Nuttman-Shwartz & Berger, 2012).

- Learning outcomes include *intercultural competence*, *global citizenship* and development of students' *practice frameworks* (Trede, Bowles, & Bridges, 2013; Yu, 2011)

Experiences need to be supported by *critical pedagogical frameworks*. *Immersion alone risks reinforcing racism* (Trede, et al., 2013).

Literature – what is contested?

- Extent of *real* "exchange" or *unilateral* initiatives? (Razack, 2002).

- Professional **Imperialism** (Gray, 2005)

- Lack of *reciprocity* is a potential *pitfall* of student exchange programs. (Gilin & Young, 2009; Nuttman-Schwartz & Berger, 2012).

Literature – partnerships

- Partnerships require ***mutual benefit***: host and sending institutions should collaborate on curriculum design, assessment activities and research (Barraket et al., 2009; Alphonse, 2008; Razack, 2002; Gilin & Young, 2009).

Literature - observations

- Good practice guides are written from the perspective of sending agencies with a focus on logistics.

- Voices of host institutions are absent.

- Insufficient analysis of the nature of power in institutional relationships
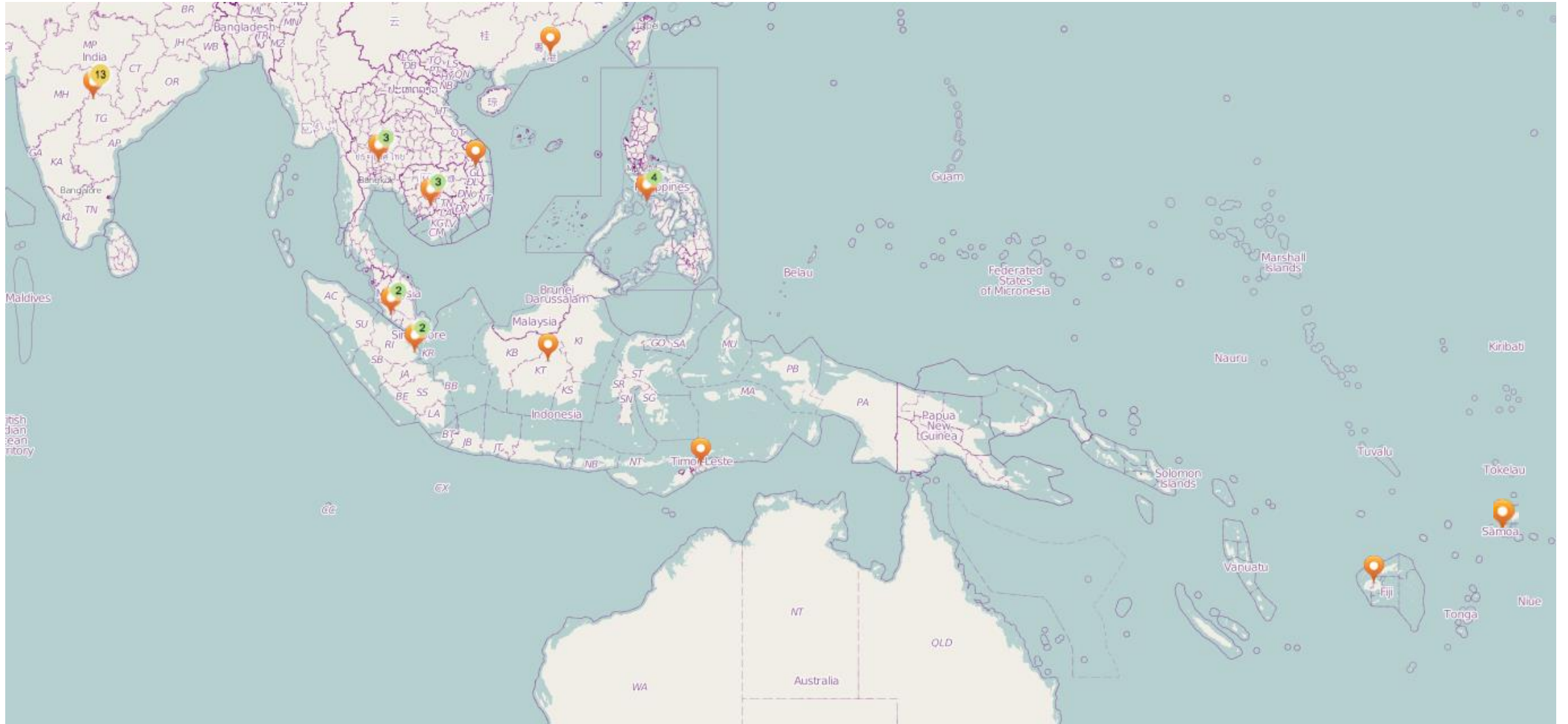
Survey of Australian Schools of Social Work

- **30** Schools of Social Work in Australia

- **90%** completed the Survey (**27** schools).

- **85%** engaged in international exchange activity (**23** schools).

- **What do they do?**
  - Field placement (**20** schools)
  - study abroad programs (**13** schools)
  - **short-term programs (9 schools).**

Where do they go?

Reciprocal activities

	Responses
Host their students for field placements	9
Host their staff for visiting scholar activities	9
Host their students for a short-term study program	6
Collaborative research activities	6
Collaborative teaching activities	5
Joint conferences	3
Joint curriculum development	2
Other (joint conference presentation)	1

Note: N = 15

Going places

What did they learn?

- Improved confidence in inter-cultural environments

- Improved inter-cultural skills.

- Greater understanding of:
  - global social work issues (86%)
  - international social work practice (86%)
  - alternative social work delivery models (76%)
 - impact of colonization (57%),

Interview themes: *Student learning* is important

- Learning opportunities:
  - *varied*
  - *unpredictable*
  - *unforeseen*.

- Contested ground:
  - What constitutes **effective learning**?
  - How is learning **best achieved**?
  - What is an appropriate level of **supervision** and **support** for students?
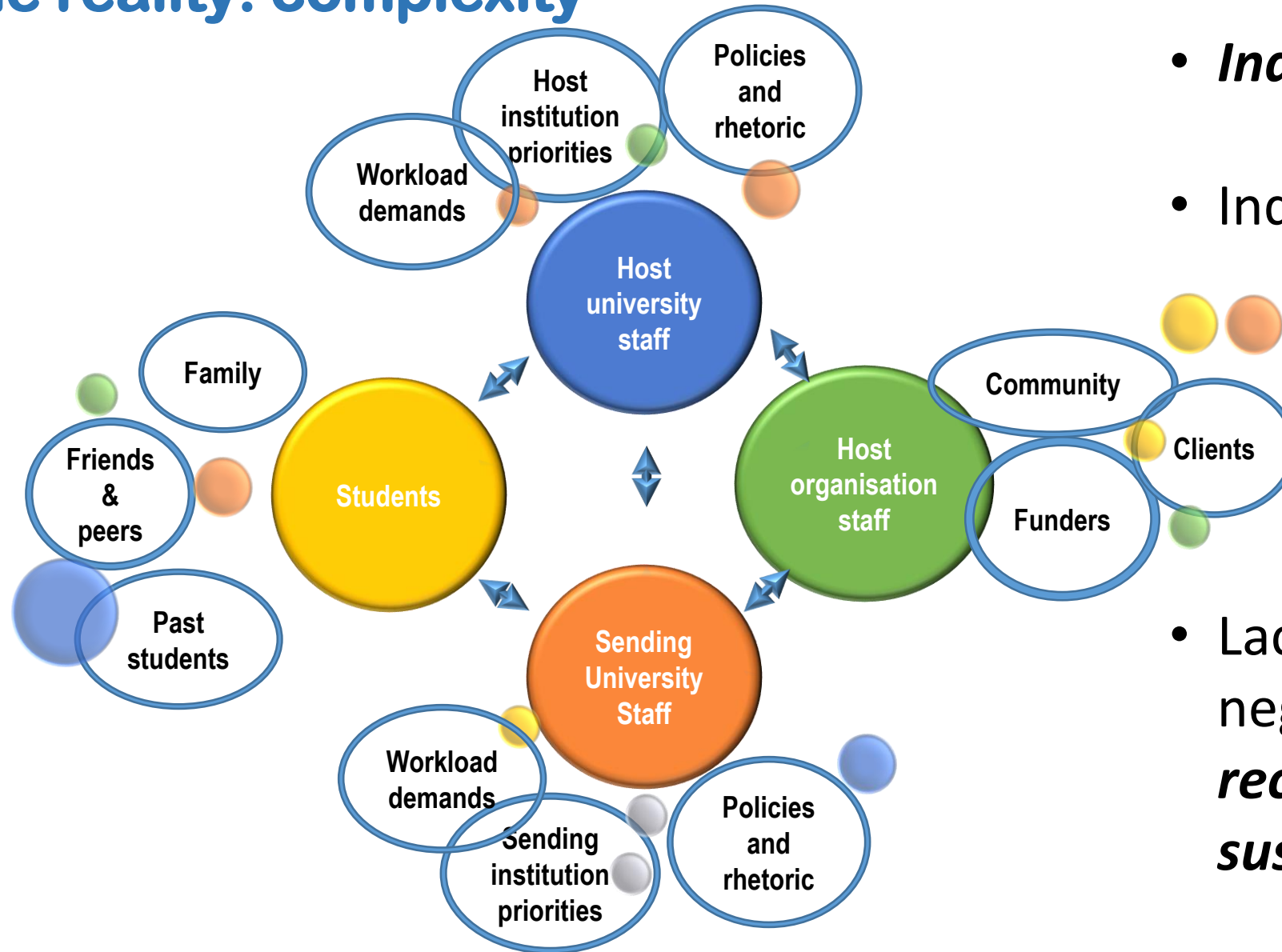
Relationships

- Central to exchange programs
- Based on **personal connections**
- *Occasionally* **Institutionally driven**
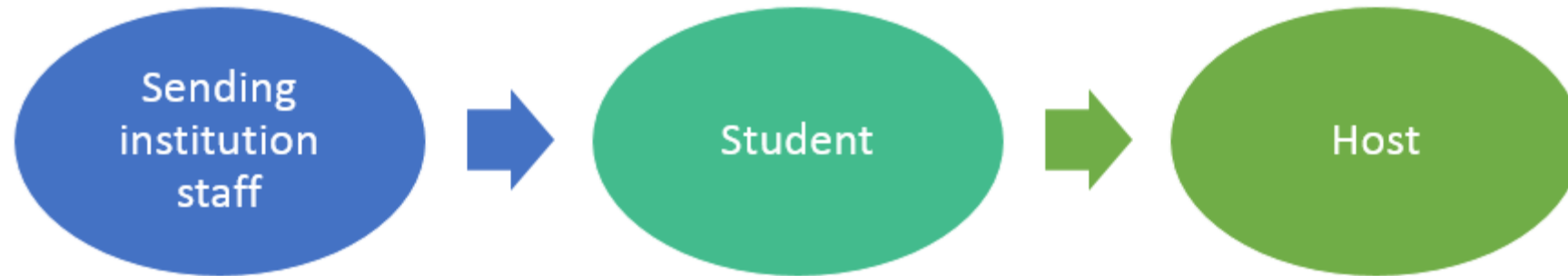
The narrative of exchange is often simplified and the work required to *maintain* relationships lacks *visibility* and *support*.

The reality: complexity

- *Inadequate* Resourcing

- Individual *'champions'*

- Lack of resourcing negatively impacts on *reciprocity* and *sustainability.*

Reciprocity

- *Reciprocity* is not universally *understood*, *defined* or *readily implemented*.

- Descriptions of reciprocity in practice included:

  o *sharing resources*

  o *making a contribution in the host country*

  o *two-way flow of students and staff*.

Risk and safety

- *Most* *interviewees raised risk and safety issues*
  - Unsafe environments
  - Illness
  - Personal crises

- *Students* <u>AS</u> *risk* – significant workload for hosts.

Long-term relationships- important part of risk management

International student exchange scenario: starring…….

Narrator

John

Som Ying

Student 1

Student 2

1. Establishing relationships

2. Recruitment

3. Preparation

4. The exchange experience

5. Reflection and debriefing

Workshop part II: small group discussions

- What is your experience/ interest in international student exchange?

- What works? What doesn't?

- If someone is starting an exchange program, what are the three most important things to think about?

Project Phases

Feb 2015 – Jan 2016

Team formation, literature review, quantitative and qualitative data collection. Identification of current practice and lessons.

Jan – Oct 2016

Data analysis and workshops to test good practice.

Nov 2016 – July 2017

Dissemination of final project outcomes.

Want to keep in touch?

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