

International students in Australian VET – framing a research project

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Presentation Outline

- Research aims
- Background of the research
- International Students in VET
- Critical issues in teaching international students in VET
- Research Design

Research aims

1. analyse the association between international purposes of investing in VET courses and their learning practices
2. explore staff's adaptation of their practices in response to international student characteristics, needs and the tensions they may experience
3. identify factors that shape the VET sector's capacity and potential to internationalize the curriculum, innovate learning practices, and enable it to remain globally competitive

Australian education sectors: increasing proportion of
cross-border students
(AEI, 2009)

Sector	October 2007	October 2008
Higher Education	177,887	179,865
VET	120,162	167,272
ELICOS	98,490	112,039
Schools	27,447	28,668
Other	26,678	30,761
Total in Australia	450,664 IS enrolments	518,605 IS enrolments

The context

- Exports of international education services generated \$4.5 billion to Australia in 2002
- In 2006, education was Australia's third largest services export, contributing around \$9 billion to national budget
- In 2007, education export overtook tourism and became **Australia's biggest services export**
- It contributed **14.2 billion** to the Australian economy in 2008 (AEI, 2009)
- Over the past 10 years, the annual rate of growth of education export is 15%, compared to 6% of services export rate in Australia.
- Australia is the third largest international student market in the world

The Context

- * International education as the largest services export industry contributes to Australia's national income through: fees paid by IS, expenditure on goods and services, offshore education provision
- * This industry currently creates approximately **80,000** jobs for Australia (AEI, 2009)
- * International education also contributes to educational innovation and the internationalisation of education
- * International education also help to enhance Australia's competitiveness, trade, skilled immigration and diplomacy, social & cultural enrichment to the institutional communities and the host countries

Background of the study

- There were **175,461** international student enrolments in VET in December 2008 (AEI, 2009).
- VET has experienced a steady growth in the number of international student enrolments since 1990 and has been **the fastest growing sector** since 2005
- International student enrolments in VET grew by **226.9%** between 2002 and 2008
- The number of international students' enrolments in the Australian VET sector increased by **45.1%** in 2008 as compared to **4.5%** in higher education (AEI 2009)

Background of the study

- The bulk of the increase in international VET enrolments since 2005 has occurred in the fields of 'Management and Commerce' and 'Service, Hospitality and Transport'.
- It has been claimed this growth is closely associated with the advantage DIAC's Migrant Occupations in Demand List (MODL) accords international students who complete their studies in certain areas of 'Service, Hospitality and Transport' (Birrell et al. 2007).
- As a result of the recent changes in skilled migration policies announced by the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship in December 2008, there may be associated changes in the fields of study that a proportion of international students will be interested in pursuing in the coming years

- However, the fact that the United Kingdom saw the VET sector grow **22%** in 2006 (AEI 2007) suggests the recent growth is not merely migration related.
- Alternative to seeing VET as a migration route, VET has been viewed as a pathway to skills development that can be utilised in the student's home country or a means to personal achievement and self-development.
- But what are the primary motivators influencing VET enrolments and the associated implications remains unclear.

International students in VET

- VET: more prone to view students/international students as 'clients' or 'consumers' of 'services' and 'products' than are schools, ELICOS and universities (e.g. See Australian National Training Authority 2003; Mitchell et al. 2006)
- There has been limited research on the learning characteristics and needs of international VET student 'customers' while considerable research has been devoted to these issues in higher education (Cownie & Addison 1996; Rizvi 2000; Doherty & Singh 2005; Kettle 2005; Tran 2008; Tran 2009; Wang, 2009).

- There is a small body of literature in VET that has focussed on international students but this has been limited to studying literacy levels, absenteeism, visa non-compliance and how international students view the teaching practices of their host countries (Volet & Pears 1994; Leong & Pope 1999; Gunn-Lewis & Malthus 2000; McCracken 2000; Watson 2003).
- There has been an absence of empirical research on the adaptation of international students to the requirements of the Training Packages currently promoted in VET and in particular how individual students' different purposes in studying a VET course may influence how they mediate their learning practices.

- Recent research has brought a broader lens to the understanding of the motivations and experiences of international students through the concepts of investment and imagined community (e.g. McKay & Wong 1996; Norton, 2001; Norton & Toohey 2002; Doherty & Singh 2005; Arkoudis & Love, 2008).
- Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital', Norton and Toohey (2002) argue that why and how learners invest in their course links to their desire to 'acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which in turn increase the value of their cultural capital' (p.122).
- This emerging stream of research underpins the connection of students' investment in a specific course, their purposes of so doing and their learning practices.

- Der Linde proposes that the notion of personal capital should be incorporated in the exploration of TAFE students' outcomes as this enables us to capture 'the inherent impetus and values that individuals ascribe to their motivation to undertake a course of study' (p.23)
- Research on the motivations underlying students' choice of an international education at two forms of investment: positional investments and self-transformative investments (Pyvis & Chapman, 2007)

Critical issues in teaching IS and internationalising the curriculum in VET

- Tensions between how to address diverse international students' characteristics and needs while at the same time maintaining what teaching staff perceive to be institutional expectations and standards
- The disengagement in learning activities of international students whose main goal to come to Australia is not to study
- How Training Packages designed for the Australian market and generic competency-based approaches can be adapted to suit the needs of international students and the demands of the potential industry in the social context other than Australia
- How to incorporate an extended international dimension into the curriculum

Research Approach

- Case studies of international students and staff from three government and three non-government VET institutions in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria
- Semi-structured interviews conducted with three groups: international students, staff teaching in relevant disciplines and personnel administering international programs and international students support in 2009 and 2010.
- An online survey will be undertaken with international VET students in all VET institutions within Australia in the second phase of data collection for the project in 2010.

Thank you and feedback!!!

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