

Pedagogy not political pointscoring:

How training providers teach international students



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Troubled times for international education in Australia



“Cooks galore and hairdressers aplenty” (Birrell, Healy & Kinnaird, 2007)



... but what about the pedagogy?

- VET literature in this area is slim
- Emphasis on teacher attitudes, learning styles, pastoral care and English language issues
- Some literature on students' economic background and their engagement in part-time work



Service Skills Australia funded project on VET practitioners

- Larger project: survey of all service skills RTOs, eight case studies in four industry areas, focus groups with industry representatives, additional interviews, and validation workshops. May-October 2009. Researchers Erica Smith, Ros Brennan Kemmis, Lauri Grace, Warren Payne.
- This paper based on: telephone interviews with senior managers in four RTOs with substantial numbers of overseas students; case studies in two hospitality RTOs (one public, one private) Total of 20 interviews.



What did we find?

- Nature of the students
- Nature of the curriculum
- Benefits and challenges associated with teaching international students



Special curricular and pedagogical arrangements

- Inclusivity of other cultures in teaching materials and teaching staff.
- Maintaining a high international and national profile.
- A focus on work placements and on cultural requirements for Australian workplaces.
- Back-up workplace systems such as in-house enterprises.

What works well? Teachers

Teachers can:

- Show that they value different cultures.
- Use visual teaching as much as possible where students' English skills are initially poor.
- Mix international with local students in group activities.
- Ask the students easy questions – definitely do not avoid them in questioning.
- Be approachable and friendly.
- Ensure that assessment tasks do not include English language requirements over and above the appropriate level.
- Ensure that domestic students are not disadvantaged while attending to international students.

What makes a good teacher of international students?

- *There's one teacher I can think of who is just a very genuine, patient, nurturing, but sort of also a little bit of no nonsense as well... She's always very proactive and she knows students*
- *'not treating them differently, but not treating them the same'*

What works well? RTOs

RTOs can:

- Provide English language support.
- Forge and maintain good relationships with local employers to ensure the maximum availability of placements and part-time work.
- Provide a substitute for paid work for the students where necessary.
- Ensure that students understand the cultural norms of the industry as well as developing the necessary skills.
- Provide pastoral support services.

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