

# Global Student Mobility in the Asia Pacific



Global Student Mobility in the Asia Pacific:  
Mobility, Migration, Security and Wellbeing  
of International Students

Edited by

Peter Kell and Gillian Vogl

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P U B L I S H I N G

Global Student Mobility in the Asia Pacific:  
Mobility, Migration, Security and Wellbeing of International Students,  
Edited by Peter Kell and Gillian Vogl

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## PREFACE

Over the past two decades the impact of globalization in the Asia Pacific has been immense. Asian urban mega cities have risen-up, China and India have become economic powerhouses, and the demands for Asia Pacific cultural and media experiences, travel and business is unprecedented. We have also witnessed a great movement of peoples between and within the nations of the region. Apart from travel and holidays, everyday thousands of people are traversing Asia Pacific borders for work and employment, to gain social and political freedom, or to seek a better lifestyle for themselves and their families. In respect to lifestyle, an emergent, educated middle class has also grown to demand the trappings of a new, consumerist-driven lifestyle. For their children, a higher education, preferably in English, is a necessary prerequisite to a well-paying, professional job at home, or abroad. Yet our scholarly understanding of this new group of mostly young, upwardly mobile, overseas students is found wanting.

Relatively few writers have so far explored and analysed the dilemmas, issues and problems faced by the students themselves, and also their impact on their new host societies. Important questions concerning overseas students come to mind: How have they adapted to life abroad in terms of friendships, diet, and distance from family, friends and other networks?; Do male and female overseas students experience the same or similar problems with respect to daily living and interaction in the host society? Are their discernible difficulties with, in many instances, a vastly different education system and pedagogy? Apart from the financial, what contributions do these students make in their new college, university or town? What are their expectations of education and life abroad and have these been met? How has their experience in another culture transformed then in terms of values and beliefs? What does the host society offer these students to meet their personal, psychological or social and cultural needs? How do students cope with studying in a language, English, that for many of them is not their first language spoken at home? Are overseas students generally accepted in their college or university and, if not, what policies, plans and programs have been implemented to ensure their safe and satisfied with their educational experience? Finally, is the phenomenon of

global student mobility truly ‘globalized’ in the sense that both student and host society benefit? This is, therefore, a timely and important book as we enter an era of rapid societal growth tempered by global social and economic uncertainty within the Asia Pacific region.

The contributors are all noted and experienced scholars of international and higher education, and the book covers both important theoretical questions as to the nature and extent of student mobility, as well as provides significant research findings concerning the international students themselves - their motives for studying abroad, as well as their experiences in the host countries. Theoretically underpinned by a nuanced understanding of globalization and risk society theories, this book is essential reading for researchers and university administrators throughout the Asia Pacific region, and serves as a timely reminder of the complexities of the issues faced by international students as they negotiate the often taken for granted path to academic achievement and future professional careers.

—Timothy J. Scrase, PhD  
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Transformation Studies  
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—Peter Kell & Gillian Vogl



# GLOBAL STUDENT MOBILITY IN THE ASIA PACIFIC: MOBILITY, MIGRATION, SECURITY AND WELLBEING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

PETER KELL AND GILLIAN VOGL

This volume explores in detail global student mobility and the growing internationalisation of higher education. This edited collection looks at the experience of students and the tensions and dilemmas associated with their adjustment into the academic, social and cultural environment in their host communities. The contributions in this volume document and investigate these issues through several case studies of global student mobility in settings in Malaysia, Australia and China, as well as programs associated with East Timor, Hong Kong and Singapore. The linkage between global student mobility and the Asia Pacific is strong as Asian students make up the majority of students who study in universities outside their own country. In some ways global student mobility is an expression of both the growing aspirations for higher education and the mobility of the people in the Asia Pacific region to undertake study across the globe.

## **Global student mobility: A phenomena of the Asia Pacific**

This special international volume recognises the importance of the Asia Pacific region as the biggest “supplier” of international students. Asian students form the largest group of international students enrolled in overseas courses and reported on by the OECD or the UNESCO statistics. They make up 45% of the total of international students in the OECD countries and 52% of the non-OECD countries. This predominance of the Asia Pacific region sees students from China with 15.2% overall as the largest group of international students enrolled in the OECD area (OECD 2006). The recent surge in Chinese students sees them now overtake other

nationalities as the most numerous. In Australia, Chinese students are the largest group of arrivals in 2005, representing 17% of all educational visitors. Similarly Chinese students make up 15.2% in the United Kingdom and 11.1% in the United States. In OECD countries significant numbers of international students also come from India at (5.7%), as well as Japan, Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia (OECD 2006).

The growth in students from the Asian region is attributed to the combination of rapid economic growth and the rise of a middle class with aspirations for higher education and limited local capacity in higher education (ABS 2007; Marginson and Sawyer 2005). In many of these countries the capacity to absorb this demand is limited by a reluctance of the state to invest further in higher education and although there is a growth of private universities in many countries there is not still the capacity to meet the growing demand. The attraction of overseas qualifications from prestigious universities in Europe, Northern America and Australasia is a powerful “pull” factor in promoting global student mobility. Another “pull” factor is the disproportionate demographics between the Asia Pacific region and the developed world in the northern hemisphere. In contrast to the western nations where the population is steadily aging the Asia Pacific region is typified by growing numbers of younger people and this provides new potential students for developing nations experiencing a thin demand for higher education (Marginson 2004; Marginson and Sawyer 2005).

There are also historic reasons for this movement of students from Asia to the west associated with post-colonialism. Many of the nations were either subject to colonial rule by European powers or are an integral part of the newer hegemonic sphere of influence of the United States. These colonial legacies have strongly influenced the destinations of Asian students and sees students from the former British Empire such as India, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Sri Lanka going to the United Kingdom, or the former dominions of Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Students from Korea, Japan and Taiwan, all nations that have been in the strategic sphere of influence of the United States, have correspondingly chosen to undertake study in the US. This cycle of dependence and inequality in the national capacities of countries to meet the needs of the local population for higher education is symptomatic of both the historic legacies of colonialism and the differential impact of globalisation. The dominance of the developed world in the North and particularly the Anglophone nations of the US, UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand is brought about by several factors.

Their dominance is not accidental but a deliberate strategy associated with the internationalisation of the higher education systems and an aggressive national approach to profiling their university sectors. These nations have retained a high profile in the international market through the activities of "national flagship" organizations such as the British Council and IDP Australia who aggressively recruit, market and source students in the Asia Pacific region (Singh, Kell and Pandian 2002).

These organizations market their individual universities as part of a broader national higher education system and they are able to capitalise on the impression that such countries have benign societies, minimal corruption and high-quality providers with long and prestigious histories. One of the added advantages they have is also the potential opportunity for migration and citizenship, particularly for students coming from developing countries, where jobs and professional opportunities are limited. The marketing and recruitment are sophisticated operations that utilise substantial resources to enable networks and connections that promote and sponsor international education and student mobility.

Much of the literature portrays the processes of global student mobility in unproblematic terms but the nature of global interaction is far from simple. Indeed there are a series of myths about global student mobility that need to be unpacked and critiqued. Some of these were unpacked in an edition of the *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies* (Kell and Vogl 2008a). Most notably the discussion explored and critiqued the myth of the vulnerability of host states and institutions to the presence of international students. Much of these concerns originate with the backlash politics associated with anxieties about migration and the ambivalence to multiculturalism in many countries. Concerns about job losses and competition from migrants, overpopulation and overcrowding owing to new arrivals and a perceived failure of migrants to "assimilate" to the host culture characterise the resistance to global mobility. These criticisms contradict the lived experience of students because students are in reality highly vulnerable in an environment of high risk. The research by Kell and Vogl (2007b) suggests they lack formal legal protections and are often encountered with high fees, poor quality programs, low quality teaching and poor support in many of their host universities. This is compounded with unfamiliarity with language, or local variations of the language, and difficulties in adjusting to changed social and cultural routines, norms and values (Kell and Vogl 2006, 2007a and 2007b). In an unfamiliar environment there is a potential for injury and illness through misadventure as well as a vulnerability to mental health issues caused by a sense of alienation and anomie which has become a common occurrence for many

international students. Kell and Vogl have argued that this phenomena needs to be interpreted as a characteristic of the nature of commodified markets that typify global student mobility.

Using Ulrike Beck's notion of the risk society the reflexive qualities of global student mobility is explored for the way in which the distribution of what are called "bads" rather than "goods" are evident in contemporary practice (Beck 2006). The market is often seen as benign and working as a finely tuned mechanism yet the reality is that the market, and the participation of some providers in it, is responsible for increasing uncertainty and contradictions. Many of these contradictions are explored by Gail Baker who counselled intending students on arrival in Australia and now works as a recruiting agent in India. In her contribution entitled *Building Resilience: Early intervention strategies designed to develop a sense of belonging in international students thus creating positive educational and personal outcomes*, Baker writes about the importance of assisting students to develop community connections because these connections "bring resilience" into the lives of the students.

A second contribution by Lynnel Hoare entitled, *The cultural complexities of internationalization: Student and lecturer experiences in an offshore Australian programme* explores the practices in offshore international programs in Singapore. The study provides an insider's perspective of trans-national education and involved research with lecturers and students. The research identifies some of the tensions associated with trans-national education including the ad hoc nature of preparation and the problematic processes of negotiating intercultural aspects of learning. Hoare documents how lecturers learned the "game" and learned the hard way through transgression. Contrary to expectations, experienced staff are not always helpful and that there was an absence of substantial preparation. Similarly students encountered difficulties in navigating through the challenges of working in an Australian environment in on offshore location and the inappropriateness of some of the material and curriculum which had "a western bias". There was little customisation of material to the new environment and the need for flexibility and adaptability on the part of teachers and in the use of curriculum and pedagogy was identified. Assessment was described as a vexing milieu that confused and immobilised many students. Many found the conventions of academia equally confusing particularly when the cultural context of a society schooled around collective processes encountered the individualised notions of western education. These finding tends to contradict many of the assumptions about "Asian learning". The seamless and unproblematic nature of the market, that is often presented as the



orthodox methodology for interpreting global student mobility provides evidence that trans-national education is a complex and discursive process where clashes of expectations and cultural misunderstandings often typify the experience. Amongst the challenges confronting students was the need to demonstrate proficiency in English.

## **English and the new knowledges of higher education**

For the international students much of their lives are mediated and negotiated in unfamiliar languages or variations of the languages that they are struggling to comprehend in varied settings. The role of language, and more particularly the status of English as the dominant language of globalisation and education, has much to do with the shaping of the practice of trans-national education and global student mobility. The ascendancy of the Anglophone nations such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Canada and New Zealand can be partly attributed to their “natural” advantage in being predominantly English-speaking nations. English has become the *de facto* official language of globalised higher education according to David Crystal who observes that:

Since the 1960s English has become the normal medium of instruction in higher education from many countries-and is increasingly used in several where the language has no official status. Some advanced courses in countries such as the Netherlands. For example are widely taught in English. (Crystal 2005: 112).

In addition to dominating education, English is also shaping new media, high technology innovations in software as well and in international communication in a way that other global languages have not attained. This also means that English language training has assumed a new importance in preparing non-speakers to participate in these industries, as well as in the global transnational higher education market. This has also resulted in English language training and instruction, experiencing an unprecedented explosion in demand as a consequence of student mobility to English speaking countries. Many of these countries have been quick to capitalise on this with English language training linked to preparation for academic programs. In Australia the sector of English as an Intensive Course of Study (ELICOS) is a growing sector with one in five students in Australian courses in 2005 being overseas enrolments (ABS 2007:4). English language programs are increasingly used as front-end options for intentional universities in non-English speaking countries and are a conduit for the continued demand for international education.

While English is the dominant global language it is not a homogenous language and this presents both positive and negative features that influence global student mobility. English is spoken, as a second language, by more people around the globe than there is of first language speakers and this means that there is a large catchment of potential students for Anglophone nations to draw on. English is also characterised by a growing range of local variations in accent, idiom, terms and grammar structures. As a global language it also has an organic quality that sees dynamic and rapid change of all these features of the language. But this dynamic quality is also contradicted by the static and traditional conventions around standardised English and its continued use as the basis for formal academic English. In the context of an explosion and growing recognition of the new varieties of English, there is also a tension between notions of “correct” English and the new organic varieties of English. Indeed this is evident in popular culture with the language of “hip hop”, “raggae” and “jive talk” now being used as popular terms in conversational English.

The nature of English has also been reshaped by new technology with communication modes being shaped by email communications and SMS, as well as the multiple media where graphics and blogs and wikis also developing new forms of communication (Singh, Kell and Pandian 2002). These developments provide opportunities and dilemmas for international students. The accessibility and the possibilities of new communications provide more user-friendly interfaces and provide access to wider sites of knowledge. More instant forms of connecting with learning communities are evident but there are also concerns, particularly by cultural conservatives, about how these undermine traditional notions of scholarship. While providing greater access and opportunities for authentic learning tasks, there is also concern that some of the disciplines of traditional academic work are being undermined.

However, the tensions around English competence and usage in academic settings are a site for contestation and tension. Much of these arguments are contextualised around a view of students that sees student proficiency as inadequate and there is an accusatory culture that sees students as fraudulently obtaining entry through corruption of the testing systems. The periodic press hysteria around proficiency has been an ongoing feature of the media and critiques of the standard of English and language capabilities are many and varied. There is also a related stereotyping that sees learners, particularly those from Asia, as passive and compliant learners who are uncritical and unused to “western” forms of learning. While many students come from exam-based systems where memorisation is favoured as a learning mode, there are accompanying

assumptions that many students are incapable of shifting their processes of learning to more autonomous and creative ways of learning. While this is a superficial way of judging learning capabilities many of the western approaches also reduce opportunities for other non western approaches that have a different perspectives and knowledge systems to be utilised. The capacity to embrace other knowledge systems is frustrated by a post-colonial hegemony that has been described in this discussion.

### **Global student mobility: tensions and innovations**

This sees the manifestation of internationalisation being limited to the distribution of products, services and methodologies that are either, direct artefacts of western style embodiments of learning, or are copies and adaptations of occidental views of knowledge. The products represent the post-colonial arrangements that see trans-national higher education dominated by the institutions of the North or the developed world. The space for local knowledge and local developments is a closed, or at best a limited space that is also filled with tensions and dilemmas. Pluralistic views of knowledge are often suppressed and this creates difficulties for international students whose experience is typified by a pluralistic and diverse linguistic environment. This is often confused by the hegemony of English and also other requirements around national languages. How the students' language and experience is incorporated in the institutional experience of academic learning is a question that emerges. Koo Yew Lie in her contribution, *Mobilizing learners through English as Lingua Franca (ELF): Providing access to culturally diverse international learners in higher education* explores the multiple discourses used by international students. This chapter documents the experience of Thai students in using English as an academic discourse in a Malaysian University. The contribution by Koo Yew Lie narrates the way in which the student utilises English to assume a global identity while preserving a locally connected discourse through languages such as Thai and Malaysian to also inform this new identity.

The nexus between the hegemony of English, the multiple perspectives of academic knowledge and the different academic traditions creates an environment where the student responses to these are subject to new tensions. Stereotyped views about the capabilities and learning styles of Asian students present a view of Asian learners that positions them as passive and compliant learners. Many students' experience is already shaped by examination-based systems that are reliant on memorisation but many academics in the developed world mistake the conditioning to these

structural and systemic conditions with the actual capabilities of students. Assumptions about the abilities of individual students and Asian students more generally are confined by this misconception and a failure to understand the intersection between agency and structure (Giddens 1991). This means that the response of students is conditioned by prior experiences that have been determined by structural, administrative and regulatory systems. The ambivalence about the performance of Asian students is often shaped by these assumptions rather than any awareness that the conditions under which Asian students make the transition from one academic culture. There is also a failure to recognise that these transitions are often poorly supported by host institutions. Overt and explicit information on how to make this shift is lacking and students are often left to guess what the conventions and protocols actually are. Students are often reliant on incomplete and fragmented information often sourced from other students. In such an environment the conventions around plagiarism and academic conduct become more treacherous and problematic for academics and students alike.

These tensions around, a commonly held set views and the perspectives of understandings about academic cultures and quality are the background of some proposed interventions to assist students. These issues are discussed in contributions from Marilyn Kell and Robyn Gregson in two separate but related chapters. Marilyn Kell in the contribution entitled *Western notions of academic integrity as a barrier to international students* documents seven perspectives on the learning experiences of international students and critiques many of the assumptions under which the academic performance of Asian students in western universities are framed. Tensions about the historic and cultural origins of knowledge and their influences on academic conventions are explored to explain some of the dilemmas for students. Some of the controversies and commonsense understandings of plagiarism, rote learning and poor writing skills are also described and an intervention is proposed. This chapter describes an intervention to assist students meet these challenges of the western conventions of learning through an online program called *Get it! Write*. A description of *Get it! Write* is included in the next chapter by Robyn Gregson *Overcoming barriers: Student use of an online writing and referencing guide*. Utilising a learner directed online resource, Gregson describes how students can be assisted in making the transition across academic cultures and conventions. *Get it! Write* is a self-directed intervention that enables student to solve problems on academic conventions that they encounter in their courses without losing face. The chapter explores how this program responds to the challenges of academic

writing, academic conventions, constructing and writing arguments as well as the mechanics of such protocols as referencing and grammar. The author provides a holistic approach which does not separate the technical and instrumental needs from the social and personal needs of students. The online program highlights the need to build confidence and trust between students and academics and is described as a surrogate mentor by Kell and Gregson. The *Get it! Write* project provides an example of how the reflexive quality of issues emerging from global student mobility may actually promote innovation.

The trans-national nature of student mobility is also shaped by a link between innovation and competition. Responding to a market context which situates trans-national education as a competitive market creates a climate where seeking a competitive edge places great importance on innovation. This creates the offering of niche and specialist products and services which includes new ways of learning and new forms of technology. What is considered to be innovative might be questionable. There is a growing trend towards developing innovative and creative responses to deal with the multiple dimensions of global student mobility. The response of higher education providers suggests a more diversified and differentiated offering targeted to what is often seen as “market” needs.

Pressure to secure market presence has seen growth in the use of new technologies as a way of delivering to international students. Michael Singh and Wei Guo in *The digital education revolution and language: Insights from Sassen on transforming a Chinese academic into a trans-national researcher* describe the ways in which new technologies mediate the learning environment for international students and provide opportunities for engagements that promote critical and reflective opportunities through new virtual environments. Importantly this contribution recognises the potential that new technologies have for developing collective and collaborative processes for learning which overcome the hegemonic qualities described earlier in this introduction. In the Singh and Guo contribution the opportunities for researchers to find new spaces and opportunities through the new technologies is presented as a new way to develop research and researchers.

This contribution involves postgraduate research and postgraduate study and this is a source of growing activity in global student mobility. Although most international students are in undergraduate programs leading to local degree level qualifications, when compared to the patterns of domestic enrolments, international students are more likely to enrol in postgraduate and research programs (Hatakenaka 2004: 11). The growth in

postgraduate research is related to the growth of advanced research in some countries, particularly in Europe. The 2004 OECD data indicates that the greater popularity of tertiary type A (three year degree programs) where transferability of the qualification into the labour market is easier (OECD 2006:293).

However, some countries such as Australia and Sweden have broadly the same proportions of students in tertiary type A courses and advanced research programs suggesting that the success of these countries is based on recruiting students as undergraduates and then enabling them to undertake postgraduate research studies in the same country. In countries such as Belgium, Canada, Hungary, Spain, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Iceland and France there is growth in advanced research programmes that is linked to the growth of innovation industries in these countries as well as providing option for high-level skilled immigration. Post-graduate research programs and advanced research programs are growing as a proportion of student mobility in Australia because they offer opportunities for high level employment in their home countries as well as providing advantages in remaining in the host country through skills migration or as permanent residents.

The issue of supervision and the development of appropriate supervision models in cross-cultural settings is also a source of growing interest. In the contribution entitled *Supervision and cultural issues in thesis production: A survey of Australian and international students* by Sue McGinty, the impressions of supervision by international students, as well as others, is explored. The chapter describes a survey on expectations about research supervision and roles of supervisors and students. The participants were grouped around categories associated with familiarity with English and status as international students. The survey identified that there was general agreement about the roles of supervisors but international students who spoke English as their first language expected a closer relationship with supervisors in thesis production and had expectations of a more hands-on role. The research also identified the need for a more programmed and interventionist approach to the needs of international postgraduate research students.

Global student mobility arrives at a time when there is increasing interdependence and interconnectedness. Most recently this interconnectedness has been evident in the discussions about global warming. The concerns about ecological sustainability are the background for the contribution by Hedda Ransan-Elliott entitled *International students of sustainability science at the ANU: Perspectives, challenges and opportunities* which documents research on study abroad students

undertaking a course on Education for Sustainability (EfS). The study explores the motivations and experiences of students undertaking EfS including their relationships with local students and their perceptions of educational quality. The study found that transformative possibilities in a study abroad program were not self evident and that a deliberative structured program is needed to meet the anticipated transformative outcomes. Part of this is finding better ways for students to respond to the intercultural context they found and work with the diversity of worldview points, values and norms they encountered.

Another contribution emerges from the post-conflict period in East Timor where trans-national education has an important role in developing newly emerging state structures. The contribution by Lorraine Sushames and Kylie France entitled *Bridging the educational divide, delivery of post-conflict education for international student* documents a program in literacy and language for soldiers from the newly independent nation state of East Timor. The contribution reflects the diversity of programs and initiatives involving global student mobility because the capacity building objectives that link to state building differentiate it from the more common individual motive that dominates the mobility of students. The chapter also identifies some of the challenges of development programs in settings where language, culture and the experience of a post-conflict environment shape the experience of students. In such a situation the assumptions and approaches of teachers and administrators is challenged by these circumstances and special needs of a group who are in the military. Building a student group and developing a common sense of purpose in an offshore location is discussed in this chapter. The program also provides a window into the way English language provides the foundation for such programs and how such programs need to be negotiated and customised around the specific needs of the learners. In the case of students from a post-conflict situation these needs may be extended beyond the individual skilling of students from the less developed world to strategies that rebuild their confidence in the community and the structures that renew a civil society in these nations.

The mastery of language in the formal university settings and the informal community interactions will often have an importance in determining the character of the experience of international students. Relationships around work, around partnerships and academic progress are strongly influenced by language. But the quality of the experience cannot be left to the individual resources of students and some responsibilities lies with the host universities in brokering both language development and connections with the host community. Profound challenges arise for

international students in developing affiliations and a sense of identity with their host communities and this has been identified as important in determining the nature of students' experiences. The importance in developing links between the students and their host community are seen as fundamental in providing a positive and creative experience. But this type of relationship needs to be managed by both the communities where mobility takes place as well as the host institutions. There also needs to be both a symbolic welcoming and recognition of the presence and contribution of international students.

This assumes a new importance in the context of the ambivalence towards international students and occasional resistance to students and harassment of them. The "politics of the backlash" to outsiders demands a much more pro-active approach by universities and civic leaders in assisting a growing sense of belonging and as a way of recognising the contribution of students to their local communities. There is little real recognition beyond an instrumental notion of the financial contribution of students that students contribute to the social and cultural fabric of the places they chose to study at.

In the final contribution entitled *Welcome to Wollongong: Host communities and international students* Gillian Vogl and Peter Kell document a community action research project in Australia where a community group developed a project to facilitate a sense of belonging for international students. The project entitled Welcome to Wollongong mixed elements of the formal, the arts, pageantry and the new technologies of the web in developing a community based research project. This project had a strong engagement and participation from the community. Of particular importance is the agency and involvement of international students, along with others in the community.

Welcome to Wollongong is a good illustration of how students are capable of mobilising in a collaborative manner and working with others for general improvement for the collective student body. This project involved a core group of students with most coming from Asian nations who were active and engaged in contributing to a positive and creative student experience. Their contribution to this project, documented in the Vogl and Kell's contribution, provides compelling evidence that refutes the stereotypes of students as passive who lack commitment to broader social goals. On the contrary students demonstrate a continuous generosity that showed a commitment to contributing towards a better and more harmonious interaction between students and the community.



## **New frameworks for interpreting global student mobility in the Asia Pacific**

Much of the discourse in global student mobility fails to capture the agency of students and their capacity to shape and influence the nature of their experience. Much of the institutional responses repeat these misconceptions in viewing international students as deficient and incapable of agency. Institutions and governments see international students as dependent and in need of monitoring. Evident in some of the few programs that assist students is a perpetuation of a view that sees students as deficient and dependent. This has led to a relationship that is typified by paternalism and a welfare paradigm that reduces opportunities for student activism and involvement. The opportunities for students to contribute their skills and energy are few and students are a resource that has not been tapped and exploited by many institutions. This can be attributed to the orthodoxies used to interpret and analyse global student mobility that has de-personalised and dis-empowered international students.

The current orthodoxy interprets global student mobility as being composed of rational individuals making decisions within an economic framework. This is a superficial and inadequate framework for analysis that fails to account for the complexity and diversity of phenomena and experiences that typify student mobility. Market analysis is dependent on use value and the rationality of individual decisions made on calculations of value. This does not reflect the complexity of issues associated with migration, mobility and achieving a sense of wellbeing described in many of the contributions in this volume and other studies of international students. The market analysis does not account for the collaborative nature of mobility where decisions about study destinations involve collaborative involvement of families, communities, employers as well as government. Successful trans-national education also involves the collective efforts of university recruiting staff, administrative and support groups as well as teaching teams. All these collective efforts are omitted in the orthodox theories of student mobility.

Many of the contributions in this volume have highlighted the challenges that many people experience in their collective efforts in responding to the challenges of internationalisation. The authors have documented and highlighted the ad hoc and fragmented approaches that emerge as institutional responses to internationalisation. While many institutions have ambitious plans surrounding internationalisation and globalisation, their responses have featured inadequate planning,

preparation and resources accompanied by dysfunctional systems as a well as teaching and learning models that do not account for diversity. The contributions call for a more systematic focus on the needs of international students rather than the residual and “bolted on” approach to internationalisation that has been evident in many institutions. The *laissez faire* approach that assumes that students and staff will cope and automatically meet the needs is identified as inadequate and needs to be replaced by a more planned and interventionist approach. Such an approach needs to recognise the vulnerability of students and recognise the rights and entitlements of students. Many institutional responses are conditioned by a view that students should be “eternally grateful” for the opportunities that international education brings them. This sentiment operates on a contradictory logic that suggests that international students should both suspend a critical analysis of their experience of global student mobility while also being required to make substantial financial outlays.

The responses that have also seen students as threatening to institutions and the integrity of academic disciplines need to be replaced by more sophisticated discourses that recognise broader multiple perspectives on knowledge and promote learning opportunities that negotiate intercultural understandings. Institutional and systemic responses to international students in the Asia Pacific will need to also recognise regional interdependence and the interconnectedness associated with globalisation. Some of the contributions in this volume are promoting notions of global citizenships where connections span national boundaries and create broader affiliations. These are coalitions and collaborations that develop a broader understanding and are underpinned by an optimism about the potential for globalisation.

The formation of affinity and association of individuals within the context of the risk society and in the context of globalisation remains a key question. How in the context of the social and structural patterns that promote competition and social fragmentation do people associate and become “*friends*” and how might people such as international students form attachments and gain a sense of belonging? This question is placed against a context where life is seen as a risky venture so that a normal life story becomes seemingly a “*risk biography*” which as many of the contributions discuss is a feature of global student mobility. In seeking to ask questions about association in the risk society Pahl (1998) who explores the notion of friendship describes the need for “*character friendship*”. This concept accounts for the need for more open and changing associations in a society that is more fragmented and the way in

which family and kin have been displaced as central figures in the lives of people. Pahl (1998) also argues that there is a need to overcome the barriers to friendship that include imbalances of power owing to class as well as the “anxious self”. The suggested way forward is the development of identity sharing partnerships that are personally liberating and that have a de-institutionalised quality. Some of the projects mentioned in this compilation have embraced these principles and sought to develop new directions. The notion of friendship is important for international students seeking to establish life in a host destination and Arndt suggests new forms of friendships have to have a “*regard for the person from the distance which the space of the world puts between us*” (Pahl 1998:113).

These friendships and associations are not simply acquaintances but have the potential to create coalitions and collaborations that feature improvements and change to counter the alienating experiences of global market capitalism. The development of these types of collaborations will need to be complemented by a more systematic approach to managing and responding to the needs of international students.

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## CHAPTER ONE

# BUILDING RESILIENCE: EARLY INTERVENTION STRATEGIES DESIGNED TO DEVELOP A SENSE OF BELONGING IN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS THUS CREATING POSITIVE EDUCATIONAL AND PERSONAL OUTCOMES

GAIL BAKER

### **I live here like a dog**

“I live here like a dog”. I have heard these words numerous times spoken by students feeling so lost, so desolate that they believe there is no hope for them. Their pain is incalculable. Nobody can imagine the depth of their despair as they compare their experience here in Australia as an international student with that of their former life back in their home country. For them all sense of hope is gone.

At times I have wanted to weep with them as they talk of the shame they feel in living like this, of the lies they tell to parents and family that everything is OK, that their studies are progressing well and that their life in Australia is good. They try not to call home very often and when they do they keep phone calls brief so they don't cry as they speak to parents, but one can only hold back the tears for so long. The façade they present of a happy life threatens to crack, and if it does then worried parents will demand their precious child return home. Parents I have spoken to continually ask “Who will look after my child whilst he/she is in Australia?” The care of their children is far more important to parents than the education they will achieve.

For seven years I counselled international students regarding a variety of issues ranging from academic failure, personal problems, student visa,

accommodation, employment, unplanned pregnancies, substance abuse; in fact they spoke to me about anything that was causing them distress, because often they were alone, without their usual support systems to guide and support them; alone and vulnerable. It was very common for a student I had helped to then bring in another student also experiencing some form of distress. Word of mouth is very strong amongst international students so providing assistance to one can often result in inadvertently assisting many.

Prior to working with international students I was employed in a private secondary college and then an alternate education setting for 'at risk' secondary students. The parallels between all these students, irrespective of their culture or socio-economic background was both enlightening and at times frightening. There was very little difference in outcomes for those experiencing problems. Dislocation from family caused by myriad of factors whether due to family breakdown for the local students or international students many thousands of miles from home resulted in a number of students from each cohort suffering similar consequences - mainly early withdrawal from education consequently reducing their life chances. I believe that working within such diverse areas of education and sharing in students experiences has given me a unique perspective, knowledge base and set of strategies from which to operate in order to continue to develop early intervention focused programs.

Traditionally students in a university setting enrol for one year and at the end of that year, if they are not achieving satisfactory academic results they are interviewed and if reasons and supporting documents are not found to be compelling enough then their program of study is cancelled and if they are international students they are reported to the Department of Immigration And Citizenship (DIAC). This generally means the cancellation of their student visa and the end of their dreams and the end of the future they had planned. This may sound dramatic, but often families have put their homes on the line to secure a student loan with the belief that once their child has graduated and secured a good job then they will have the means to repay the loan. If the student loses their visa and fails to graduate, then there is no job, no money, a huge debt and immense shame brought upon their family.

### **International students 'at risk'**

Our international students must be considered as much 'at risk' as their western counterparts due to this lack of connectedness to their family and