Determinants of participating in Australian university student exchange programs

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Abstract

Outbound mobility programs such as semester-long exchange programs are one of the many strategies implemented at Australian universities to develop graduates' intercultural skills and international knowledge. Since few Australian students participate in exchange programs, this paper presents a literature review and proposes a model of the contextual and individual factors which may influence a student in their decision to participate in an exchange program and their choice of host destination. Implications for policy makers and program directors to expand student participation and future areas of research are discussed.

Key Words

Influencing factors, student exchange, Australian universities

Introduction

At a time of unprecedented global economic upheaval and within the current 'knowledge economy', the need for individuals, institutions and countries to develop intercultural understanding and competencies is more acute than ever before (Altbach, 2008). Policy makers in government and universities around the world are responding to this call by internationalising higher education (e.g. Kishun, 2007, Yonezawa et al., 2009, Li and Bray, 2007). University outbound mobility programs are one of many strategies used to equip young people to be effective to work and live in an increasingly globally interconnected economy and society (Asoaka and Yano, 2009, Wiers-Jenssen, 2008, Norris and Gillespie, 2008). In Australia, outbound student mobility programs incorporate (a) exchange and study abroad programs, which enable students to study overseas for one or two semesters; (b) short-term study of between two and eight weeks such as cultural tours and language study; and (c) internships and clinical placements.

In 2007, almost five percent of Australian university students had an overseas study experience including student exchange programs, cultural tours, internships and language study visits (Olsen, 2008). Student exchange is the most popular form of outbound mobility with over 2% of Australian undergraduate students participating in an exchange program by the time they complete their studies (Daly and Barker, under review). There is a limited understanding of the factors influencing Australian students in their decision to stay at the home institution or study abroad. Rather much of the extant student mobility literature in Australia has focused on the factors motivating international students, particularly those from Asia and the Middle East, to complete their qualification

in Australia and their experiences adjusting to life in the host country (e.g. Leask, 2009, Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002).

Most of the literature that describes the factors affecting the decision to go abroad does so from the perspective of long term sojourners such as international students (e.g. Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). While this work may give insight into the determinants of participating in a student exchange program, the push-pull model such as that proposed by Mazzarol and Soutar is limited as it does not consider students' personal characteristics and perceptions (Li and Bray, 2007). Rather the international student literature has focused on external drivers of overseas study. There is a paucity of work theoretically conceptualising the student exchange decision-making process.

The aim of this paper is to develop a better understanding of the sojourn decision made by exchange students. Through reviewing the literature of the factors influencing the decision to study abroad, a model derived from Morgan (2003 cited in Sussex Centre for Migration Research and Centre for Applied Population Research, 2004) will be developed outlining the factors influencing the decision to participate in an exchange program and the choice of host destination. Using the work by the Sussex Centre for Migration Research and Centre for Applied Population Research (2004) and the model of the student decision-making process proposed by Morgan, both contextual and individual factors will be reviewed. First, the international, national and institutional context will be considered as these represent the environment in which a student will decide to study abroad. Next, while the international, national and institutional settings may be conducive to overseas study, exchange students are a self-selecting group (Cushner and Karim,

2004). Thus, it is necessary to consider the individual factors which may motivate or inhibit study abroad.

Contextual factors influencing the sojourn decision

International context

International education is being driven by three things: (1) international trade and relations; (2) the increasing need for graduates with international skills; and, (3) shifts in public opinion of cross-cultural interactions, overseas travel and study (Knight and Altbach, 2007, McLellan, 2008, Mok, 2007). However, international factors such as cost and personal safety may influence students when considering whether to participate in the exchange program and their choice of destination country. For example, in the last decade the international geopolitical climate has changed as a consequence of the ‘global financial crisis’; ‘9/11’; the invasion of Afghanistan; terrorist attacks in Bali, London, Madrid and more recently, Mumbai; the war in Iraq; outbreaks of ‘Swine flu’, Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Avian Influenza (Bird flu); and the Boxing Day Tsunami in 2004. These events may influence a student’s inclination to study abroad.

National context

The Australian government’s international education policy framework is based on (a) valuing international education for the benefits it brings to individuals and communities; and (b) recognizing the long-term contribution of international education to intellectual, social and cultural development, economic competitiveness, trade, foreign relations and national security (Gillard, 2009). In addition to focusing

on international students studying at Australian campuses, the government recognizes the importance of outbound mobility to develop students' international knowledge and intercultural competence. There are two key government student mobility initiatives. The first initiative is the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) program which was established in 1993. The second program, University Mobility in the Indian Ocean Region (UMIOR) commenced seven years later. UMAP members include countries on the Pacific Ocean Rim from North and South America, Asia and the Pacific Islands. UMIOR incorporates nations in the Indian Ocean region such as those from Africa, the Middle East and Asia (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009a).

While UMIOR is not a funded project, the Australian government provides financial support to outbound exchange students through UMAP. Currently under UMAP each university receives \$5000 per student to subsidise the cost of a student's participation in an eligible exchange program (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2008a). For the 2008-09 financial year, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations provided approximately \$2.9 million through UMAP. Additionally in 2004, an income-contingent loan scheme entitled Overseas Study Higher Education Loan Program (OS HELP) was made available to full-time undergraduate students to assist them to study abroad for one or two semesters of their degree. Students can access a loan up to \$5,500, which is contingent on them having at least six months study remaining at the home university after their sojourn concludes (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009b). This financial

assistance may increase opportunities for students who would have been otherwise unable to fund overseas travel during their studies.

Institutional context

The institutional context incorporates factors such as the organisational culture, the commitment and enthusiasm of staff, promotion of exchange opportunities, selection mechanisms and criteria, a range of relevant and attractive agreements with host partners, recognition of overseas study, financial support, and a credit transfer system (Sussex Centre for Migration Research and Centre for Applied Population Research, 2004). The way in which the exchange program is managed reflects both how the institution interprets and implements the government's international education policy and the university's culture (Brunetto and Farr-Wharton, 2005). While, the university's philosophy of outbound mobility may be evident in the organisation's strategic plan, the academic programs and services which support student mobility and the organisational strategies which will help to integrate mobility into the university's administrative processes and structures, may more accurately demonstrate the institution's attitude towards mobility than described in the strategic plans (Brunetto and Farr-Wharton, 2005).

The content of government international education policies, level of resourcing and accountability of the university to the government affect how university senior management implement and prioritize student mobility policies (Brunetto and Farr-Wharton, 2005, Brunetto, 2000). In turn, the way the exchange program is managed and perceived by university staff may influence which students are able to participate and their experiences at home and abroad. Excluding the work of Brunetto and colleagues

(Brunetto, 2000; Brunetto & Farr-Wharton, 2005) which investigated Australian academics' responses to a new policy relating to the Quality Agenda, there is limited research in the Australian context examining the implementation of university policies. In particular, there is a paucity of published studies which have considered policies relating to student mobility and exchange programs. One exception is Daly and Barker's study (under review) of Australian universities in which they found a significant relationship between the presence of a strategic goal relating to student exchange and the number of outgoing exchange students. However, as Daly and Barker noted only two percent of Australian undergraduate students participate in an exchange program, suggesting that the implementation process plays a greater role in student participation in exchange programs than the mere presence of a specific policy or strategic goal of student exchange.

Organisational culture mediates the implementation of policies in higher education (Brunetto and Farr-Wharton, 2005) and within the Australian system there is great diversity of culture, with different types of universities reflecting different origins and traditions, structures and programs and missions and goals. Marginson (2000) argued that there are four major types of public universities in Australia. The first type of university, the Sandstone, is aligned with the traditional 'Oxford-Cambridge' model, characterised by an elitist approach to education. The second type of institution, the Technical University or U-tech refers to those universities with a tradition of technical training and focus on applied education. The third type of university is the New University. These formed after the 1987 Dawkins' reforms and mainly comprise former Colleges of Advanced Education. The final group of universities are the Wannabee

Sandstones, who formed before 1987 and aim to have the same social and academic standing as the Sandstones. Daly (2007) reported that Sandstone universities were more likely to have proportionately greater numbers of students participating in an exchange program than New universities. This may reflect either the educational focus of Sandstone universities who emphasize meeting the social, cultural and intellectual interests of students (Stanley and Reynolds, 2005) or the different cohorts of students. Specifically, a greater proportion of students from higher-income families attend Sandstone universities while New universities tend to have a greater percentage of students from low socio-economic backgrounds than other types of institutions (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009c). While tertiary education has been made more accessible to students from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, affordability of educational activities such as student exchange programs is an issue to be considered for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. This will be discussed later.

Individual factors influencing the sojourn decision

Personal characteristics

The typical Australian exchange student is a Caucasian female. In their study of exchange students at four Australian universities, Clyne and Rizvi (1998) reported a strong bias in participants' gender and ethnicity. More recent work by Daly and Barker (2005) and Olsen (2008) identified that 60% of outbound Australian exchange students were female, and approximately 6% of participants in exchange programs in 2001 were from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. These findings do not

reflect the gender and ethnic mix of the university and broader community. Since over one quarter of Australians were born overseas and a further 25% of Australian university students are international students (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009c, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009), it is unclear as to why more Australian students of CALD backgrounds do not choose to participate in the exchange programs.

Within the literature there are two proposed reasons for the gender bias amongst exchange students. First, Goldstein and Kim (2006) speculated that certain fields of study such as humanities and social sciences are more suited to student exchange programs. The female domination of enrolments within these disciplines, may provide an explanation for the higher proportion of female students participating in exchange programs (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2008b). Second, Kling and his colleagues (1999) proposed that female students recognised that participating in student exchange programs would better prepare them for challenging the 'glass-ceiling' within organisations and enhance their success in gaining employment and promotion. Certainly, as will be discussed below, one of the reasons students may choose to participate in an exchange program is because they believe it will enhance their employability upon graduation.

In order to participate in an Australian university exchange program, students must have completed at least one year at their home university. As a result of most students choosing to go abroad in their third year of study, Australian exchange students are approximately 20 to 21 years of age (Clyne and Rizvi, 1998, Daly and Barker, 2005). At this age, students are moving through the psychological phase of late adolescence to

early adulthood which brings with it another range of factors to influence any life decisions, including the decision to move away from family and friends to an unknown environment (Costa and McCrae, 1989). Thus, it may provide an explanation as to why, at this age, the input of family and friends is so important in the decision-making process to study abroad (Cushner and Karim, 2004, Wiers-Jenssen, 2003).

Intercultural competencies

Dwyer (2004) suggested that *a priori* students who study abroad are a more tolerant group. Goldstein and Kim's (2006) longitudinal study examined student expectations and participation in study abroad programs of 179 American undergraduates in their first and final year at university. The results indicated that intercultural variables such as ethnocentrism and prejudice predicted positive expectations of study abroad rather than academic or career goals. Students with low levels of ethnocentrism and prejudice were more likely to participate in exchange programs. Similarly, Bakalis and Joiner (2004) found that students who were high on openness and had a high tolerance to ambiguity were more likely to study abroad. Australian and New Zealand exchange students reported significantly higher levels of open-mindedness towards different cultures and greater levels of flexibility than non-exchange students (Daly et al., 2004). Open individuals are more ready to accept difference between cultures (Bing and Lounsbury, 2000). In novel environments, sojourners who are able to tolerate ambiguity and are flexible, are able to adjust their behaviours, learn from their mistakes and adopt new approaches to tasks and situations (Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven, 2000). These competencies are essential for a successful sojourn.

In their work, Daly et al. (2004) used the subscales of the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) (Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee, 2002) to predict whether a student was an exchange student or non-exchange student. Those students who reported higher levels of cultural empathy and social initiative were more likely to be exchange students. If a student were to participate in an exchange program, they would need to be able to empathize with the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of people from the host culture. Without these skills, the student's psychosocial adjustment would be lower and thus the student would be less satisfied with the exchange experience (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Searle and Ward (1990) argue that social support is a major predictor in psychological adjustment. Moreover, when moving into a new culture the sojourner needs to be able to approach the social situations in an active way and to take initiative for this interaction. So, exchange students who reported higher levels of social initiative in Daly et al.'s (2004) study appeared to be more prepared for coping in their new social setting.

Travel Interest and Experience

There is a strong tendency for exchange students to be well-travelled (Brooks and Waters, 2009, Clyne and Rizvi, 1998). Certainly exchange students report strong aspirations to travel and experience other cultures (Clyne and Rizvi, 1998, Van Hoof and Verbeeten, 2005, Young and Harper, 2004). Van Hoof and Verbeeten (2005) studied the reasons both incoming and outgoing exchange students at the Northern Arizona University participated in the exchange program. The authors found the top two reasons cited by students were that the exchange program was a good opportunity to live in

another culture and a good opportunity to travel. Outbound exchange students at four Australian universities reported that they chose to study abroad because they wanted to see the world and desired building relationships with people from different cultures (Clyne and Rizvi, 1998). However, Goldstein and Kim (2006) argued that the role of previous travel in the decision to study abroad is an inconsistent one. While previous travel may enhance students' interest in other cultures and provide them with the necessary skills to be competent in the new culture, awareness of cultural differences and problems with cross-cultural adjustment may decrease interest in future overseas experiences such as student exchange.

Education and discipline of study

Australian exchange students tend to be completing social sciences/ humanities or business majors (Daly & Barker, 2005). Very few students from the faculties of Law, Science, Education and Health participate in international exchange. Two explanations for the bias of field of study of exchange students are proposed. Firstly, the social sciences and business disciplines are generally more popular within the university population. For example, in Australia 28.3% of students are enrolled in business courses while 21.5% are studying in the field of humanities (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009c). Similar proportions of exchange students enrolled in these disciplines were noted in both Clyne and Rizvi's (1998) and Daly and Barker's (2005) studies. Goldstein and Kim (2006) argued that humanities and social science majors are more flexible in their academic requirements than disciplines such as physical science and mathematics. This flexibility increases students' opportunities and

variety of subjects, which may be studied while abroad and meet the degree requirements established by the home university. However, Appelbaum, Friedler and Wolff (2009) noted that students from science fields who participate in exchange programs are more likely to be international collaborators later in their careers. This research suggests that universities should investigate opening pathways for non-traditional exchange students such as Science, Health and Technology to encourage study abroad and in turn, international collaboration, particularly in research.

The Sussex Centres' (2004) noted that the relevance of the exchange program to the discipline of study is a driver of mobility. In his investigation of the factors influencing Asian Americans to study abroad, Van der Meld (2003) noted that students chose to remain at home because they had specific curricular requirements on the home campus or study abroad did not fit in their program. For example, differences in the scheduling of the academic year may heighten concerns about prolonging studies. Certainly, Australian students in Young and Harper's (2004) study were concerned with the impact the exchange program would have on their academic progress. Students may choose to remain at home rather than study abroad because they are worried about recognition of the courses studied abroad or they perceive that their degree will take longer to complete.

Furthermore, a lack of awareness of mobility opportunities may prevent students from participating in the exchange program (Sussex Centre for Migration Research and Centre for Applied Population Research, 2004). In Malicki's (2003) study, only 68% of students indicated that they could easily obtain up-to-date information about the program.

Similarly, students in Van Der Meld's study did not participate in the exchange program because they were unaware of the opportunities (Van Der Meld, 2003).

Career development

One of the most important reasons for studying at university, whether it is in the home country or abroad, is to gain a qualification to enhance future job opportunities (Krause et al., 2005). Similarly in the context of university exchange programs, students believe that a period of study abroad will strengthen their position in the marketplace, making them more attractive to future employers (Van Hoof and Verbeeten, 2005, Clyne and Rizvi, 1998, Young and Harper, 2004). Ninety percent of UK students participating in the European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) program indicated that they felt that study abroad was worthwhile in relation to developing an international career (Sussex Centre for Migration Research and Centre for Applied Population Research, 2004). In her study of Norwegian exchange students studying abroad, Wiers-Jenssen (2003) found that three-quarters of respondents felt that future employers would see study abroad as an advantage. American and Australian students also proposed that, from the perspective of recruiters, the period of study abroad would give them an advantage over their peers (Clyne and Rizvi, 1998, Van Hoof and Verbeeten, 2005).

It appears that employers do value an overseas experience. For example, Swedish employers prefer to hire people who are partly trained abroad rather than those who have their entire education from abroad or those who are entirely trained domestically (Zadeh 1999 cited in Wiers-Jenssen, 2003, p.404). Similarly, Chinese employers prefer

‘Western-educated’ graduates (Waters 2006, cited in Brooks and Waters, 2009). However, British graduates who had studied their entire degree overseas felt disadvantaged when compared to their peers who remained at home because their qualification took longer to complete and employers were unaware of the quality of the overseas institution (Brooks and Waters, 2009).

In their study of Australian Human Resource managers, the Queensland Education and Training International (QETI) and International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) (2006) found that an overseas experience was highly prized by 70% of employers in multinational corporations with 55% of national employers viewing the overseas experience as a positive attribute in a graduate’s resume. Employers perceive that graduates with overseas experience offer specific skills and expertise which can enhance opportunities for business growth, particularly in the global marketplace. Indeed, language skills and cultural competence are emphasized as important outcomes of studying abroad rather than the educational course and academic achievements (QETI and IEAA, 2006).

Unfortunately, there are few studies investigating the actual career outcomes of exchange students. Teichler and Jahr (2001) examined the relationship between the exchange experience and career and personal development. Former ERASMUS exchange students were surveyed at three points in time - (1) a few months after returning to the home country; (2) three years after the exchange period; and, (3) five years after studying abroad. Few students believed that the exchange experience was worthwhile in relation to their income levels (Maiworm & Teichler, 1996 cited in Teichler and Jahr, 2001). In contrast, after analysing the careers of Norwegian graduates,

Wiers-Jenssen and Try (2005) noted that individuals who had studied abroad during their degree had higher incomes in their current job than non-mobile students. Certainly respondents in Teichler and Jahr's (2001) survey indicated that upon graduation, their study abroad experience stood out as something interesting to interviewers. It would be beneficial for future research to examine the careers of Australian graduates who participated in exchange programs to consider whether the experience assists their job-seeking, income levels and professional progress.

Foreign Language Competence

Foreign language competency may act as a barrier to mobility because, unless they choose to study in an Anglophone country, Australian students will be concerned about their ability to succeed in their studies and engage with others. While a lack of a second language is one of the top reasons students do not study outside of the home country (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002, Clyne and Rizvi, 1998, Sussex Centre for Migration Research and Centre for Applied Population Research, 2004), Teichler and Jahr (2001) found that students are motivated to study abroad in order to develop their proficiency in a second language and learn about another culture. Similarly, students who had an interest in learning another language are more likely to study abroad (Goldstein and Kim, 2006). However, overwhelming Australian university students are monolingual (Martin, 2005) which suggests that few students will participate in their university exchange programs or students may choose to study in English-speaking countries (Daly and Barker, 2005). Martin (2005) noted that none of Australia's universities have compulsory language study requirements which is in great contrast to 90% of similar institutions in the USA have such study requirements. Thus, Australian universities may need to

consider the structure and requirements of qualifications to increase student awareness and opportunity for study abroad.

However, the issue of foreign language competence also must be considered at a national level. When compared to most OECD countries, Australian students receive far less instruction in a language other than English (LOTE) than their overseas peers (Department of Education Training & Youth Affairs, 2005). While LOTE education is one of the key learning goals in Australia, the Australian LOTE review conducted in 2003 found that only 13.2% of year 12 students were engaged in LOTE programs in 2000 (Department of Education Training & Youth Affairs, 2003), declining further to less than five percent at the tertiary level of education (Martin, 2005). Less than three percent of university students study an Asian language, which represents Australia's neighbours and key trading partners (Group of Eight, 2007). Interestingly, these figures do not differentiate between native and non-native speakers.

Compared to their Australian peers, students from other countries start learning a second language younger, spend more time per week on foreign language instruction and this continues through all levels of education (Martin, 2005). For example, in all European countries and Canada, it is compulsory for students to learn at least one foreign language (Group of Eight, 2007) with countries such as Greece, Belgium, Ireland, Czech Republic and Korea offering up to 160 hours per year for 9-14 year olds. In Australia, similar-aged students are offered only 40 hours per year (OECD, 2007). Thus, it may be hypothesised that Australian university students may be less inclined to participate in an exchange program due to disinterest in other languages and cultures than students from other nations with more foreign language instruction.

Personal Relationships

For international students enrolling in foreign universities, the decision to study overseas is a joint-family decision, with parents being involved in both the decision to study abroad and the choice of host country and institution (Lim, 1992). Similarly, the recommendations of significant others and their attitudes towards study abroad may influence a student's decision to participate in an exchange program. Students are more likely to participate in the exchange program if their family or friends have recommended it (Wiers-Jenssen, 2003, Cushner and Karim, 2004, Malicki, 2003). According to Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) model of the factors motivating students to seek an overseas education, an international student will select their host country based upon personal recommendations from their family and friends. At one Australian university, there was a high referral rate from friends with 35% of exchange students reporting they participated in the program because their friends recommended it (Malicki, 2003). Young and Harper (2004) reported that friends and parents are most influential in the decision of Australian exchange students to participate in the exchange program.

Students may be discouraged from studying abroad with concerns for relationships at home and the host destination (Clyne and Rizvi, 1998, Sussex Centre for Migration Research and Centre for Applied Population Research, 2004). While these sojourners worry about making new friends while abroad, concern about separation from family may prohibit a student from choosing to engage in an exchange program. The Sussex Centres' (2004) surveyed UK students who had been abroad to determine

problems with the exchange experience. Twenty percent of respondents expressed a problem with being away from their boy/girlfriend and 8.9% felt that being away from the family home was problematic.

Financial constraints

Financial reasons are most commonly cited for non-mobility (Cushner and Karim, 2004, Doyle et al., 2009). As indicated earlier student participation in exchange programs at Australian universities differs according to university type. A greater proportion of Australian exchange students attend Sandstone universities which are represented by a greater proportion of students from families of high socio-economic status. The ability of specific students groups to participate in extra-curricular activities may decrease in proportion to increasing enrolments, especially in the context of the recent Bradley (Bradley et al., 2008) review of Australian higher education, in which it was proposed that participation by students from low socio-economic groups increase by 20% by 2020. Affordability of extra-curricular educational activities such as the student exchange program is an issue to be considered. Clyne and Rizvi's (1998) findings that Victorian university exchange students tended to be private-school educated and self-funded their sojourn, suggest the influence of socio-economic status in regards to who is financially capable of undertaking the opportunity of study abroad.

Research suggests that financial issues include travel costs, living costs in the host culture and loss of earnings at home (Van Der Meld, 2003). Exchange students tend to be self-funded with the cost of a six-month period of study abroad exceeding \$10,000 (Clyne & Rizvi, 1998). Furthermore, students may be concerned with the costs of

moving away from the parental home (Sussex Centre for Migration Research and Centre for Applied Population Research, 2004) or loss of employment at home and an inability to work while abroad. When combined with loss of income at home and the inability to work while on exchange, the study experience could represent a significant financial burden to students. Certainly, non-exchange students in Van der Meld's (2003) study did not participate in the exchange program because they could not afford to lose their regular income from their employers at home.

Conclusion

A review of the literature has shown contextual and individual factors which influence a student's decision to participate in an exchange program. These are shown in Figure 1. The international context impacts on a student's decision making in two ways. First, cost and travel safety influence if students go abroad and their choice of host destination. Second, global market forces and community expectations influence the home nation's international education policies and programs. In turn at the national level, government international education policies influence the universities' student mobility policies and programs. The national policies can include those beyond international education such as second language learning at secondary schools. The ways in which institutions implement government student mobility policies reflects the accountability, resources and leadership from the government and university and the university's organisational culture.

Insert Figure 1 here

The report by McInnis and colleagues (2004) discussed industrial countries' government policies of student mobility, however, the authors did not consider the impact of such policies at the institutional level nor on students' decision to participate in exchange programs. Thus, it would be worthwhile for future studies to consider the impact of university student exchange policies on participation in outbound programs. Possible research projects could include qualitative investigation of university characteristics and how this relates to the management of mobility programs and in turn, student involvement in exchange programs.

There seems to be a bias in the Australian exchange student population in terms of gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, previous mobility and discipline of study. An Australian exchange student is more likely to be a 20-year old Caucasian female from a family with a high household income, have previously travelled and be studying either business or humanities/social sciences. Few studies have examined why there are differences in the personal characteristics of exchange and non-exchange students. Since the study abroad and student exchange literature does not provide justification for why this 'typical' student would choose to study abroad, further empirical research is warranted to examine the role of demographic factors such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, and discipline, influence the decision to participate in exchange programs.

It seems that sojourning students require specific intercultural competencies for effectiveness and satisfaction in the host culture. Yet, it is unclear whether these are learned competencies developed through pre-departure training or do exchange students differ in terms of intercultural competencies from those who remain at home. Future

research should investigate the drivers and barriers of student mobility specific to the Australian higher education context. Specifically, studies could examine how students' personal characteristics and other individual factors identified in Figure 1 may influence the decision to participate in exchange programs and how exchange students differ from their peers who remain at the home institution.

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