Coming Ready or Not: Chinese Students in Australia, Their Motivations, Language Proficiency and Impact on Australia's Tertiary Environment

COMING READY OR NOT

CHINESE STUDENTS IN AUSTRALIA

THEIR MOTIVATIONS, LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND

IMPACT ON AUSTRALIA'S TERTIARY ENVIRONMENT

ROBYN PACEY

B. Bus. (QIT), Grad. Cert. Man. (QUT), PG. Dip.Ed. (UQ),

M. Marketing Management (GU), MA Applied Linguistics (GU)

GRIFFITH SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

ARTS, EDUCATION AND LAW GROUP

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

FEBRUARY 2014

ABSTRACT

Around one in five of Australia's tertiary students comes from overseas, with the largest proportion from the People's Republic of China. Despite needing the revenue from international students to fund domestic tertiary places, there is continuing disquiet over the language preparedness of overseas students, the willingness of universities to allow them to bypass language entry standards, and the subsequent impact on the academics responsible for teaching them.

To gauge the experience of typical Chinese students at Australian universities, this study followed a group of five for almost nine years, from when they enrolled in a foundation program in northern China to the present, to establish their motivations for wanting an Australian education, whether their language was sufficient to enable them to participate fully, and whether they were able to integrate into the academic and broader communities.

The research had a secondary focus; to examine the impact of large cohorts of international students on Australia's tertiary environment, and whether international education can be better delivered to achieve a more rewarding experience for all participants.

The study began in 2005 with classroom reports and observations of the students during their foundation year, followed by annual interviews and personal contact after their arrival in Australia. To address the secondary focus of the study, data were collected from the Academic Language and Learning (ALL) advisers who assist tertiary students with language development, from the discipline academics who teach them, and from pro-vice chancellors (international) who are responsible within universities for the international education policy framework.

The study followed an ethnographic approach, using grounded theory and domain analysis to find themes common to the interviewees, and applying a constructivist approach to emphasise the meaning participants ascribed to the situations they recounted.

What the study found was that the students came with language levels below that required by universities and some didn't progress past that point, even though they had successfully completed undergraduate and master's degrees. The study also found cheating by overseas students was rife and plagiarism difficult to prosecute. Despite the Chinese students' best efforts, contact with domestic students and the broader Australian society was minimal. Permanent migration was a key goal, although changing government policy put it beyond the reach of some. None of the students, despite their degrees, was able to find employment in Australia commensurate with their education.

The study also found the language advisers questioned the competence and willingness of academics to teach students from non-English speaking backgrounds, academics were over-worked and disgruntled and did not see language progression as part of their role, and a pro-vice chancellor admitted that universities adjust their entry requirements in order to compete for international student revenue. The study determined that the 'third wave' philosophy that is meant to deliver educational richness, while laudable, seems a long way off.

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I certify that this thesis is the result of my own research except where otherwise acknowledged and that any help received in the research and in the preparation of this thesis has been acknowledged.

I certify that the thesis, in whole or in part, has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the help and encouragement of my principal supervisor, Associate Professor Rod Gardner, particularly in assisting me to focus my research project and in guiding the research as it has evolved.

I also wish to acknowledge the support given by my secondary supervisor, Dr Maria Dobrenov-Major, who guided me in the early part of my research project, and continued to offer advice and encouragement after she retired.

I also want to thank the participants in this study, who gave their time willingly and provided frank and insightful commentary. In particular I want to recognise the students who were its central focus, and with whom I developed a strong bond from the time we first met in 2005. Their success demonstrates their motivation and resilience.

Finally, I want to thank my family, Findlay, Kirrin and Christian McKechnie, who have always supported and encouraged me throughout my studies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: RATIONALE, APPROACH AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER 4: THE LONG MARCH OF CHINESE STUDENTS – THE STUDENTS' STORIES

Chapter 5: 'ALL THE WAY' – THE LANGUAGE ADVISERS

Chapter 6: 'PILE IT HIGH, SELL IT CHEAP' – THE DISCIPLINE ACADEMICS

Chapter 7: FROM COLOMBO PLAN TO THE THIRD WAVE

THE PRO-VICE CHANCELLORS (INTERNATIONAL)

List of Tables

CHAPTER 1: RATIONALE, APPROACH AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

International education is Australia's largest services export, contributing $15 billion in export income to the Australian economy in 2012-2013. The *Higher Education* sector generated $9.8 billion or almost two-thirds of the industry's total earnings, according to Australian Education International (AEI), the international education division of the Australian Government (AEI, 2013, [1]). In terms of student numbers, Australia's education system had 515,853 full-fee paying international student enrolments in 2012, of which *Higher Education* (HE) was the largest sector with 230,923. China was by far the largest source country for international tertiary students in 2012, with 40.8% of all enrolments (AEI, 2013, [2]).

Chinese students study in Australia for a variety of reasons, many of which emerged during the research for this study. Some have been unsuccessful in securing places at Chinese universities, where entry is highly competitive and available only to students who achieve exceptional academic results at high school. Others come to oblige their families, who see a Western education as both prestigious and a gateway to a successful career. Some come to experience a life different from the one they have in China and others want to settle here; permanent residence has long been a powerful driver of growth in international student enrolments (Birrell & Perry, 2009). However an Australian education does not always fulfil the expectations of international students and their families. Despite securing places in Australian universities, many overseas students are unable to participate fully in Western tertiary education, held back to a significant degree by marginal language skills. Others more attuned to a Chinese education system find it difficult to adjust to the independent learning style expected of them in Australia. For those who do graduate with degrees and secure permanent residence (and many have), their futures are in

no way guaranteed. A not uncommon situation occurs when graduates start looking for jobs and are unable to secure employment commensurate with their education (Birrell & Healy, 2008). Another incongruity occurs when students graduate but can't secure permanent residence (PR). On one hand, students are judged competent to satisfy Australian universities' standards and to be awarded degrees. On the other, it is not uncommon for graduates to fail the language test for permanent residence, with some finding that their language levels have not progressed or may have even regressed during their years at university (Birrell, 2006). In other words, they satisfy university but not immigration standards. In examining the issue, this thesis explores international students' motivations for coming to Australia to study and their expectations and achievements, through the experiences of five young Chinese students who have completed tertiary studies in Australia. The thesis also looks at the situation from the perspectives of the university-based academic learning advisers who assist students with language issues, and from the discipline academics who teach them. Finally the thesis explores the challenges of providing international education, through the point of view of senior academic administrators at a number of Australian universities. The study's areas of inquiry include whether the language levels for non-English speakers to enter Australian universities are set at an appropriate level; how students circumvent these language levels and why universities allow this to happen; the impact of large numbers of international students on Australian tertiary teaching, and the role of Australian migration policy on the international education industry.

In summary, by looking at the students' experience from all perspectives, the thesis hopes to establish how prepared international students are for their studies in Australia, and whether universities have the capacity to provide them with a first-class education.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH

Measures introduced by the Australian Government in the mid-1980s allowed universities to charge full fees to international students (Smart, Volet, and Ang, 2000) leading to a quite radical

transformation in tertiary education both in funding and in terms of a changing student cohort. The new policy saw enrolments by full-fee paying overseas students rise quickly from around 2,000 students in 1986 to almost 70,000 in 1994 (Walters, 2011). By 2009, around one in five tertiary students in Australia came from overseas (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2011) and revenue from international education began to become increasingly important to tertiary institutions. By the mid-1990s international education revenue had begun to replace declining government financial support; public money for *Higher Education* fell by 4% in the decade to 2006 despite a 31% increase in student numbers. By 2009 international students were providing on average 15% of universities' funding (Wesley, 2009). Since 2004, universities have received more money from international student fees than they have from domestic student income (Group of Eight [Gof8], 2011). The recruitment of international students as a source of income stemmed from the Federal Government's failure to adequately plan and fund tertiary education according to Barthel (2007), who said although many overseas students were ill-prepared and desperately needed language support, the funds they generated weren't used to provide this assistance, going instead to supplementing shortfalls in government funding.

After years of steady growth, and just as universities had become reliant on overseas student income, international student numbers began to falter. Enrolments in HE had grown steadily before peaking at 242,186 in 2010 (AEI, 2012). However by 2012, enrolments had fallen by 5% to 230,923 (AEI, 2013, [2]). Australian student visa data also show fluctuations. In 2006-07, 112,038 applications for *Higher Education* visas were granted, increasing sharply for two years, followed in turn by an almost equally sharp decline in the subsequent two years. Growth was marginal in 2011-12 before an increase of almost 12% in 2012-2013. Despite the resurgence, the 127,269 HE visas granted that year are still below the peak of 138,860 in 2008-2009 (Department of Immigration and Citizenship [DIAC], 2013, p.16 [1]).

Fluctuating student enrolments create funding uncertainty, in that universities now depend on a steady stream of overseas student revenue. As a coalition of leading Australian universities, the Group of Eight (2011, p.19) points out in its Submission to the Review of Higher Education Base Funding, while international education is likely to remain a strong export earner, it is unlikely that it will be able to rely on international students to plug the funding gap.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2011 [2]) and AEI data present a clear picture of fluctuating student numbers. What is less clear is what slowed the growth of international students coming to Australia. A number of reasons have been identified. One is that the relative strength of the Australian dollar since 2010 has made inbound costs including fees, travel and everyday living more expensive (International Education Advisory Council [IEAC], 2013). Another is that migration policy changes have weakened the appeal of study in Australia as a route to migration (Gof8, 2011). These policy adjustments have made permanent residence more difficult to achieve, but have also created an environment of uncertainty for international students considering overseas study destinations. Another possibility is that the standard of education does not live up to expectations. Yet another cause may be that a Western education doesn't lead to the career options it was expected to deliver. It may well be that none, all, or a combination of these factors is the cause of these stagnating numbers. However because of international education's ranking as a major generator of export revenue, understanding how international students evaluate Australia as a study destination is critical. Given that Chinese students form the largest source country for international students (AEI, 2013, [3]) it seemed both practical and realistic to ask overseas students already in Australia about their motivations and expectations, and whether they had achieved their objectives during their time in Australia.

A significant body of research has already examined international students' experiences studying in Australia. My study seeks to build on that research, by charting the progress of a small group of

students over a period of almost nine years, from the time they left high school in China. The study builds on their stories through extended interviews with academics and senior university administrators, to provide a picture of international education from the perspectives of all participants.

1.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

An ethnographic approach has been used to explore this issue. Ethnography is described by O'Reilly (2012, p.11) as iterative-inductive research that evolves in design as a study progresses, drawing on a family of methods and involving direct and sustained interaction with people within the context of their daily lives and cultures. The ethnographer watches what happens, listens to what is said, asks questions and produces a richly written account that respects the complexity of human experience. This approach was chosen as a method that would enable the researcher to probe the motivations and experiences of participants in the study. More detail will be provided about the methodology in Chapter 3. However a brief explanation of how the research approach evolved may be useful in setting the scene. Originally the research began as a longitudinal case study with five Chinese students, beginning before they left China in 2006 and continuing with annual interviews until post-graduation. However as a consequence of the information they shared as the interviews progressed, it became evident that their stories would not allow the complexity of the environment to be explored fully, and other perspectives needed to be canvassed. The study then broadened to include interviews with both the academic language and learning (ALL) advisers who help students with language and learning issues, and the academics who teach the disciplines in which the students enrol. The study concluded with a series of interviews with senior academic administrators to gauge their views of the challenges that international education present and how their institutions respond to these challenges.

Australian Education International commissioned a national survey of international students in late 2009, with findings released in December 2010. The survey was designed to assist the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) improve the experience of international students by obtaining a greater understanding of how current international students felt about a range of issues such as quality of teaching and the reputation of both the degrees and the institutions they had chosen (AEI, 2010). The survey was repeated in 2012 (AEI, 2013 [5]). Both produced valuable data about students' experiences in Australia. The results, which will be discussed in more depth in the Literature Review, were for the most part overwhelmingly positive (AEI, 2010; 2013 [5]). What the survey lacked, though, was the 'voice' of students about their experiences. This does not imply a failing: rather the quantitative methodology did not provide a forum for students to expand their views. The role therefore of this qualitative study is to explore the views and feelings of a small number of individuals within the international education sector, building a deep understanding of the issues that confronted them, through a series of formal interviews and informal contact over a period of almost nine years. This ethnographic approach seems an appropriate methodology because, as O'Reilly (2012, p.10) points out,

> Ethnography that pays attention to wider structures and to the thoughts and feelings of agents, within the context of daily life and individual action, is an ideal approach to research the practice of social life.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This project was designed to establish why the students in the study came to Australia, what they expected to find here, and whether they were successful in achieving their objectives. Of interest to the researcher was the level of English language competence the students had and whether it was adequate to enable them to participate fully in university life. As the study progressed it became evident that the presence of international students in large numbers affects others in the tertiary sector, including the discipline academics who teach them, and the universities which not

only receive considerable funding from their presence, but also have to provide significant resources to accommodate their needs. Although the scope subsequently widened, the study began as a longitudinal case study following the five students and focussing on their experiences to capture qualitative data over time. It is acknowledged that while these students were a source of rich data, their experiences cannot be applied to the broader community of Chinese students studying in Australia. However it is the depth of understanding of what the students experienced in their three to six years in Australian tertiary education that may inform those interested in the study, in terms of improving delivery of education and the experiences and participation of international students. In the course of the students' interviews other questions emerged which uncovered broader issues that seemed highly relevant. The research questions therefore developed in two linked but separate lines of inquiry, one relating specifically to the students and the other to the broader tertiary environment. The two major research questions were:

1) What was the students' experience in studying in Australia's tertiary sector?
2) Can international education be better delivered to achieve a more rewarding experience for all participants?

A number of supplementary questions emerged in relation to the students' experience.

a) What motivated the students to come to Australia to study, and what role did permanent residence play?
b) Was the students' language level adequate to enable them to participate fully in tertiary study?
c) How successful were they in integrating into both the academic environment and into broader Australian society?

The subsidiary question that emerged from the wider academic perspective was:

d) What impact do large cohorts of international students have on Australia's tertiary environment?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This review of literature focuses on three specific fields which include relevant, related and significant concepts, beginning with a summary of the data relating to international education's importance, historically, socially and economically. As a starting point to describe the environment in which international education has developed, the review briefly outlines its history from its inception in the 1950s. It has been argued (COAG, 2010; Walters, 2011) that international education confers numerous social benefits that enrich Australian communities. In exploring international education's social impact, the Literature Review examined the influence of Australian education both on overseas countries whose students have studied here, and on Australian domestic students whose education is richer by virtue of having international students in their midst. In economic terms, the researcher reviewed trends relating to international education as a generator of export revenue and as a contributor to the funding of the Australian tertiary sector, before establishing the major source countries for Australia's international students.

The second phase of the literature review looked at issues which affect international students directly, including:

I. Their motivation for seeking a Western education
II. English proficiency as a key to student outcomes
III. Student integration

The third section reviewed literature relating to the wider tertiary environment, specifically, the impact of international students on Australia's tertiary environment.

2.2 IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

2.2.1 From inception to the present

Although Australia was one of the first countries to develop an extensive international education program (Walters, 2011) its growth as a major export industry was relatively recent (Dobson, 1998). Early education engagement between Australia and the Asia–Pacific region emanated from the Colombo Plan (Walters, 2011), a post-colonial initiative launched in 1951 to boost Asian economic and social development (Rimon, 2006). The Colombo Plan marked the formal entry of the Australian Government into the direct sponsorship of overseas students for study in Australian institutions (Walters, 2011) and was also promoted to improve relationships with Asian countries and dispel negative impressions caused by the White Australia Policy (Migration Heritage Centre [MHC], 2013) which had effectively excluded non-European migrants for much of the 20th century (DIAC, 2013 [2]).

From the early 1950s to the mid-1980s most overseas students came to Australia under the auspices of the Colombo Plan (Dobson, 1998); at any given time from the 1950s to the mid-1980s there were up to 10,000 international students in Australia, funded under the Plan and other aid programs or with fees subsidised by Australian taxpayers (Smart & Ang, 1993, as cited in Smart et al., 2000). A Colombo Plan condition was that recipients were required to return to their own countries, which included Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore and Thailand, to use their education in their countries of birth (MHC, 2013). The Colombo Plan educated a number of important Asian political leaders including former and current Cabinet ministers in Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia (Walters, 2011).

However concerns about the effectiveness of the international education program in meeting Australia's foreign policy and foreign aid objectives and the tendency for it to be used for backdoor immigration led to a re-evaluation which by the mid-1980s changed the focus from education as

aid, to education as trade (Smart, et al., 2000 p.2). A new overseas student policy introduced in 1985 allowed overseas students to enrol at Australian institutions if they met the entry requirements and paid full course costs (Reserve Bank of Australia [RBA], 2008). In 1986 there were 3,500 foreign students and trainees whose studies and living costs were paid for by the Australian Government (MHC, 2013). However the new policy saw enrolments of fee-paying overseas students increase quickly, from around 2,000 in 1986 to 40,000 in 1990 and to almost 70,000 in 1994 (Walters, 2011). Steady growth continued for more than a decade before growth became dramatic. Between 2007 and 2009 numbers escalated by 40%, peaking in 2009 with 630,694 international student enrolments (AEI, 2013 [4]). However this dramatic growth was not sustained and enrolments began to fall, triggered by factors including a strong Australian dollar, changes to migration policy and a perception that Australia had become less welcoming to international students (Gof8, 2011, p.19). The first fall in onshore enrolments since the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s was recorded in 2010 (Gof8, 2011).

2.2.1.1 Current position

As the Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], (2011 [1]) points out, there are numerous ways to measure the size of the international student population and various data sources offer specific perspectives. Three sets of data are drawn on for this review; all measure numbers and trends which demonstrate the relative strength of the international student sector.

Australian Education International (AEI) compiles *Enrolment* and *Commencement* data but neither directly correlates to the number of international students in Australia or the number of international student visas issued (AEI, 2006). This is because *Enrolment* data measure the number of students in courses at a given time while *Commencement* data measure the number of students starting courses in a given period. Because each student can commence studying or be enrolled in more than one sector simultaneously, a student can be counted more than once (AEI, 2006). With *Commencement* data, this duplication is less likely for *Higher Education* (HE) students,

who tend to be counted only once when they start their degrees, whereas *Vocational Education and Training* (VET) students tend to enrol in a new course each year, with each commencement counted (Birrell & Perry, 2009). These different sources are nevertheless useful in demonstrating movements in the market.

Latest available AEI data indicate that at year-to-date (YTD) October 2013, 504,544 full-fee paying students were enrolled in Australia on student visas, an increase of around 1.9% on YTD October 2012 figures but significantly less than the average YTD October growth rate for enrolments of 5.8% per year in the preceding ten years. The *Higher Education* sector with 228,263 enrolments was the largest at YTD October 2013, recording a slight increase of 0.4% on YTD October 2012 figures (Austrade, 2013).

Even allowing for possible inflation caused by multiple individual registrations, *Commencement* data show stronger growth. The 280,543 total commencements by YTD October 2013 represent an 8.5% increase over the same period in 2012. This is almost 60% more than the average YTD October growth rate of 5.2% per year over the previous decade. The *Higher Education* sector increased by 8.2% to 92,788 from YTD October 2012 commencements of 85,780 (Austrade, 2013).

This seems to indicate that international students are returning to study in Australia and supports the forecast of the International Education Advisory Council which predicted in February 2013 that international student numbers were likely to start increasing again in 2014 (IEAC, 2013).

The third data set, student visas issued by the Australian Government, reports the number of students studying in Australia on various student visas, by financial year. Latest available figures show a small decrease in student visa holders from 307,050 students at 30 June 2012 to 304,251 at 30 June 2013 (DIAC, 2013, [1] p.42). *Higher Education* visas were held by 57.5% of these students and *Vocational Education and Training* visas by 22.6%, with the remainder in categories which include *English Language Intensive Courses of Study (ELICOS*), *Schools,* and *Postgraduate*

Research (DIAC, 2013, [1] p.7). These numbers reflect an overall downturn in international education from its peak in financial year 2009, when 319,632 students were granted visas. However most of the loss has been in the VET sector. For example at the 2009 peak 103,789 VET visas were granted. This number fell in the subsequent two years, recovering slightly in 2012 but falling again in 2013, when only 58,563 VET visas were granted. By comparison, 138,860 visas were granted to *Higher Education* students in 2009. Two years of negative growth followed, before some marginal growth in 2012. By 2013 numbers of HE visas granted had rebounded to 127,269 (DIAC, 2013, [1] p.16), a 12.5% growth over the year. However while the market had recovered to a significant extent, the number of HE student visas granted was still short of the 2009 peak.

2.2.2. Social benefits

Walters (2011), in reviewing the educational outcomes of the Colombo Plan, proposed that over the past 25 years international education has delivered a wide range of benefits to international students. He also argued a domestic benefit; that increased business, cultural, diplomatic and research links have flowed to host countries, and educational exchanges and collaborations pave the way for future economic relationships. Walters, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Australian Education International, identified a number of Colombo Plan graduates playing a major role in the political and economic life of many Asia-Pacific region countries, including a number of former and current cabinet ministers in the Parliament of Singapore. [1]

[1] Mah Bow Tan held various ministries between 1990 and 2012, including Communications and Information, the Environment, and National Development and Trade and Industry, after graduating in 1971 from the University of New South Wales with an Honours Degree in Industrial Engineering and a University Medal, a Master's Degree in Engineering in 1973 and an honorary doctorate in 2001. After graduating from the University of Newcastle in 1977 with Bachelor degrees in Engineering (Honours) and Commerce, Singapore's Minister for National Development, Khaw Boon Wan, held senior public service posts before entering politics in 2001, becoming Health Minister during the critical Asian SARS epidemic and later Minister for National Development. Former Minister for Transport and Second Minister for Foreign Affairs, Raymond Lim Siang Keat, graduated from the University of Adelaide with a Bachelor of Economics in 1982. Currently a Member of Parliament in Singapore, he held Cabinet posts in Trade and Industry and Finance (Parliament of Singapore, 2014).

Elsewhere in the region, influential leaders including the current Vice-President of Indonesia Doctor Boediono and Malaysia's Minister for International Trade and Industry Dato' Sri Mustapa Bin Mohamed, gained academic qualifications in Australia through Colombo Plan scholarships (Walters, 2011). [2]

Australian Government agencies contend that a strong international education market is beneficial to Australia's interests. The Council of Australian Governments (2010) claims international students enrich Australian communities, bringing energy and diversity and expanding Australia's global networks and links to the world. The International Education Advisory Council (2013, p.8) also believes International education enhances Australia's broader international engagement through joint research and professional connections and says the interaction between staff and students from different cultural backgrounds helps generate mutual understanding and personal connections that deliver career-long benefits to graduates of Australian education. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011 [1]) says the presence of international students benefits all students, as well as the community more generally, by providing an opportunity to experience and expand knowledge of other cultures and languages. Walters (2011), in arguing the benefits of international education on domestic institutions, claims the internationalisation of educational programs gives domestic students a broader international perspective, a position supported by

[2] Professor Doctor Boediono graduated with a Bachelor of Economics (Hons) from the University of Western Australia in 1967 and a Master of Economics from Monash University in 1972. He was awarded the Australian Alumni Award for Sustainable Economic and Social Development in 2008 and maintains Alumni links to Australia as the patron of the Indonesia-Australia Alumni organisation, IKAMA. Holding a PhD from the University of Pennsylvania, he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Western Australia in March 2011 (Monash University, 2013).

Malaysia's Minister for International Trade and Industry, Doctor Mustapa Bin Mohamed, has held a number of influential Cabinet posts including Deputy Finance Minister, Minister for Entrepreneur Development, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Agriculture and Agro-based Industry, since graduating with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) from the University of Melbourne in 1974, and a Doctor of Commerce (Honorary) in 1997 (University of Melbourne, 2013).

Kell and Vogl (2008) who argue the presence of students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds promotes intercultural learning as well as the development of international networks. Mahat and Hourigan (2007) agree that a diverse international student cohort provides domestic students with greater opportunities for understanding other cultures and being exposed to different viewpoints about academic and social ideas. As Dalglish and Chan (2005) point out, the potential benefits of diversity are many. International students provide an opportunity for learning and a sharing of knowledge and perspectives important for success in today's global business environment. However the full benefits of internationalisation are not being achieved because international students struggle to take part in Australian society. Despite social integration being identified as a critical factor that supports successful, engaging and satisfying learning experiences (Dunstan, 2009) there is evidence this is not occurring and many international students report that their interactions with local residents remain superficial, despite seemingly regular opportunities to integrate (Gresham & Clayton, 2011). Citing Marginson (2002), Dalglish and Chan say research suggests that cultural engagement is largely unidirectional and Australian students expect international students to adjust to them, and not vice versa (p.2), thus denying both sets of students the benefits that could come from shared experiences.

The internationalisation of Australia's cities and towns is another social benefit Walters (2011) identified. However it should be noted that international students are not present in significant numbers in rural and regional Australia; despite some regional campuses having large concentrations of international students, their numbers are relatively small compared with those in major cities (Australian Education Network [AEN], n.d.). International students consider factors such as proximity to major cities and infrastructure when deciding where to study and Australian universities with the highest number of international students are all based in capital cities (ABS, 2011 [1]). Similarly, the diversity that has been claimed as a benefit of international education is not recent. The Gold Rush of the mid-19th century saw around 50,000 people arriving each year,

with Chinese the largest non-British group. Later in the 19th century waves of people from Melanesia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey and Japan came to address skills shortages in Australia (Department of Immigration and Border Protection [DIBP], 2013 [1]), followed by more than two million migrants in the 20 years immediately post World War II (MRC, 2013). The latter part of the 20th century saw an influx of migrants from Indochina fleeing Asia after the Vietnam War ended in 1975 (DIBP, 2013 [1]).

2.2.3 Value to the economy

2.2.3.1 Export revenue

Education Services is Australia's largest services export industry and fourth overall behind iron ore, coal, and gold (Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade [DFAT], 2013). Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) *International Trade in Services* data released in November 2013 show that international education contributed $15 billion in export income to the Australian economy in 2012, including $14.461 billion in fees, goods and services by onshore students (what the ABS terms 'education related travel services') and $541 million in earnings from other educational services. The *Higher Education* sector generated $9.8 billion or 67.6% of total on-shore earnings (AEI, 2013 [1]).

While export income remained significant in 2012-13, it was nevertheless a 1.7% decrease from the earnings recorded in the financial year 2011-12 and continued a trend of falling education export income that started after record revenue levels in 2009-10. Prior to that, in the decade to 2008, education exports had grown by an annual average of 15.7%, compared to 10.8 % for total exports (Universities Australia, 2009).

Table 1: Education export income 2008-2012

Year	Education related travel services (million)	Other educational services (million)	Total Income (million)	Higher Education (million)
2012-13	$14,461	$574	$15,035	$9,777
2011-12	$14,711	$542	$15,253	$9,777
2010-11	$15,500	$593	$16,093	$9,798
2009-10	$16,396	$579	$16,975	$9,474
2008-09	$15,245	$585	$15,830	$8,643

Source: AEI (2011, 2012, 2013 [1]; Personal email, J.Havelock, Aust. Govt. Dept. of Education, January 20, 2014).

International education's export ranking slipped from third in 2009 to its current position, fourth, in 2010 (DFAT, 2013).

2.2.3.2 Contribution to university funding

International education has become critical to universities as government funding of the tertiary sector has dwindled. Overseas student enrolments can also help educational institutions reach the critical mass needed to diversify the range of educational programs offered to all students (OECD, 2011). The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) noted many institutions rely on income from international students to help provide education to both domestic and overseas students, a position supported by Deloitte Access Economics (2011, p.1) which identified that international students provide an important revenue stream that allows universities to operate at greater scale, and by Feast (2002), who stated that universities are increasingly dependent on alternative non-government sources of funding and full fee paying international students are a large and increasing source of that revenue.

A coalition of leading Australian universities, the Group of Eight, in its 2011 submission to the Review of Higher Education Base Funding, argued that because public funding was insufficient, universities had become over-reliant on international fees, a situation that in the long term is unsustainable. The submission noted that international student fees represented 17% of total

revenue from all sources in 2009. The proportion differed substantially by university, with six deriving 20% or more of their income from international student fees and two obtaining more than 30% from this source (pp.18-19). The University of Melbourne, in its 2011 submission to the Funding Review, noted that international students subsidised domestic *Higher Education* students to an average of $1,200 per domestic student per year (p.2). It warned that falling numbers threatened the economic viability of the current system (p.2) and that loss of international income for the university sector would have significant consequences for the quality of higher education offered to domestic students (p.13).

The submission was written at a time when international student numbers were in decline and although they have now started to demonstrate some growth, it is nevertheless of concern that the sector is so heavily reliant on funding that can be impacted by issues outside its control, such as the strength of the Australian dollar, or changing government migration policy. As Feast (2002, p.70) points out, 'the financial future of Australian universities may well depend on the trend to enrol ever increasing numbers of international students.'

2.2.3.3 Employment

Employment in industries that support international education is another significant economic benefit derived from this major export. For example, 2007 data show only 39% of export revenue generated by international education came from tuition fees, with the balance, 61%, spent by students on their living expenses including food, housing, transport and entertainment (Connelly & Olsen, 2012). Although employment estimates vary, this spending equates to local jobs. The Council of Australian Governments (2010) credited education with supporting approximately 125,000 jobs in Australia in 2009, while the International Education Advisory Council (2013) put the figure at 100,000 jobs both in education and in the broader community. A Deloitte Access Economics report commissioned by Universities Australia and published in June 2011 (p.1) noted that *Higher Education* students generated demand for 104,705 employees on a

full time equivalent (FTE) basis. Of these, 73,302 workers were directly employed and 31,403 were indirectly employed due to the flow-on demand generated by the international students.

2.3 SOURCE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The People's Republic of China (PRC) has been the largest contributor to Australia's international student population in recent years. Chinese nationals represented 23.4% of student visa holders in Australia as at 30 June 2013, the largest group by nationality (DIAC, 2013 p.16 [1]). Around a fifth (54,015) of the 259,278 student visas granted in 2012-2013 were given to Chinese students. By comparison, India was the second largest source nation, with 24,808 student visas granted to Indian nationals that year (DIAC, p.18 [1]).

Higher Education had the highest number of enrolments at YTD October 2013, accounting for more than half (228,263) of the total enrolments of 504,544. Students from China and India represented 40.2% and 6.9% of this sector respectively. The second largest sector, *Vocational Education and Training*, accounted for 25.5% of total enrolments, with 21.4% of these coming from India and 10.6% from China (AEI, 2013 [1]).

Over the past seven years China has been a relatively stable market. Although not immune from impacts such as Australia's high currency value and changing migration policy, Chinese students were not exposed to the violence targeted at Indian students (Birrell & Perry, 2009). Neither, because of Chinese students' concentration in the HE sector, were they as exposed to recent collapses of private vocational colleges (Owens & Loomes, 2010). The following tables which demonstrate trends in student visa numbers over the past seven years show the comparative stability of the Chinese market, and the volatility in Indian student enrolments.

Table 2: Student visa holders in Australia 2006 to 2013

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Total	250,058	318,030	386,266	382,716	332,709	307,050	304,251
PRC students	54,825	67,997	76,462	79,861	75,578	71,227	71,196
Indian students	39,020	63,361	92,364	80,331	50,980	38,029	30,401

Source: Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2013, p.43) [1].

Table 3: Student visas granted from 2006 to 2013

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Total	230,807	278,715	319,632	270,499	250,438	253,046	259,278
PRC students	41,122	49,873	55,331	54,541	49,852	49,592	54,014
Indian students	34,525	47,711	65,516	29,826	28,954	33,764	24,808

Source: Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2013, p.18) [1]. ,

2.4 MOTIVATION FOR SEEKING AN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION

Studying in Australia offers many benefits to international students, allowing them to gain a high quality, internationally recognised education as well as the opportunity to experience life in Australia (ABS, 2012). However students' motivations for coming to Australia are complex; numerous studies have probed their reasons for first opting for an overseas education and subsequently choosing Australia from a number of possible destinations.

In 2012, Australian Education International commissioned quantitative research into the overall satisfaction of overseas students studying in Australia, using the International Student Barometer (which was designed specifically for international students and enables key satisfaction indicators to be benchmarked against indicators in other countries). The survey asked international students studying on-shore to rate factors that influenced them to study in Australia; of 28 factors which included *Opportunity for long-term employment or permanent residence* (personal email, S. Basrai,

Aust. Govt. Dept. of Education, 9 January, 2014), the following were rated most highly by HE students (AEI, 2013 [5]):

1. Quality of teaching
2. Reputation of a qualification from the institution
3. Reputation of the institution
4. Personal safety and
5. Reputation of Australian education system.

Ranking 21st, *Opportunity for long-term employment or permanent residence,* had not rated highly yet was found to be a key motivator in other research, including a small study by Yang (2007). Her two-phase research first surveyed potential students in China before interviewing Chinese students at a provincial Queensland university, to establish what factors influence mainland Chinese students' choice of Australia as a study destination. The study found that Australia's skilled migration policy had a major impact both on students' choice of destination and study program (p.9). As with the AEI research, the survey component of Yang's study found that the high quality of education was the most significant factor for Chinese students considering study in Australia. The studies varied however on the question of permanent residence (PR); while it did not rate highly in the AEI survey, it was significant in the second phase of Yang's research. The interviews with Chinese students already enrolled at Central Queensland University revealed migration had been the most important factor in their choosing Australia as a study destination, with 97% stating they had been influenced by the possibility of permanent residence after they finished their education. Lower fees and cost of living was the second significant issue for them (Yang, 2007, p.9). A limitation of Yang's study was its scale which she acknowledged had employed a small sample size and had been restricted to one institution (2007, p.10). However other research that pre and post-dated Yang's study generally supported its findings. In 2006 Birrell (p.55) contended that a key motivation for many international students was the possibility of living in Australia permanently, arguing that the expansion in international student enrolments

in the *Higher Education* sector appeared to be driven by overseas students wishing to obtain permanent residence. Birrell supported this assertion by citing growth in overseas student enrolments in the *Higher Education* sector in courses that led to a PR outcome, by students from countries such as China which have a high propensity to seek PR visas (DIAC, 2013 [1]). Earlier migration data also supported this view; 38% of the Chinese students who graduated from Australian universities in 2002 obtained permanent residency in 2002-03 (Bass, 2005).

Yang's (2007) research (p.8) also endorsed another of Birrell's findings that international students' courses of study had been chosen with a view to migration outcomes (2006). Most of Yang's interviewees claimed that their program choice was based on the skilled migration list of professions in demand, with around 87% studying an accounting program to boost their chances of permanent residence. In a later paper, Birrell and Healy (2010, p.75) argued that significant changes in international student enrolment patterns that paralleled changes to migration selection rules further demonstrated that many international students' academic course choices were motivated by their intention to seek PR.

In a broader analysis of overseas study motivations, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002, p.82) suggested global international student movements can be explained by a combination of *push* factors which operate in a source country to initiate a student's decision to study abroad, and *pull* factors which operate in a host country to encourage international students to study there. They claimed that for people in less developed countries, limited local access to education is a push factor that has led to a significant rise in the number of international students studying overseas (this was the case with the students in this study), with links between host and home countries determining much of the direction of the student flow. Mazzarol and Soutar's study (pp. 84-85) surveyed students in four Asian countries including China, to establish their motivations for wanting to study abroad. In the case of the Chinese respondents, investigation of the *push* factors identified three

additional influences; a perception an overseas education was superior, a desire to gain a better understanding of the 'West', and an intention to migrate after graduation (p.88).

Push factors identified by McMahon (pp. 473-474) in her 1992 study of international student flow from developing countries in the 1960s and 1970s included the level of economic wealth of the source country, its degree of involvement in global trade and the priority it placed on education.

Pull factors become important once an international student decides to study abroad; personal recommendations from family and friends influence the decision, as do knowledge and awareness of the host country and economic issues such as the cost of fees and living expenses (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002, p.82). These findings are similar to McMahon's (1992, pp. 473-474) which revealed *pull* factors related to economic considerations and trade links between home and host countries. Further *pull* factors identified by Mazzarol and Soutar included social issues such as the level of crime, safety considerations and level of racial discrimination (the latter was a factor in the decision of a number of students in this study to come to Australia).

Drawing on a number of different studies, Bodycott (2009, p.354) identified ten common *pull* factors that influence mainland Chinese students' choice of a study destination abroad, some of which were identified by respondents in the AEI study as considerations which influenced their choice of Australia as a study destination.

1. Knowledge and awareness of the institution, its reputation and general knowledge of the destination country.
2. Positive attitude toward supporting international education in the destination country.
3. Recommendations and influence of parents, other relatives and friends.
4. Tuition fees, living expenses, travel cost and social cost.
5. Environment considerations including climate, lifestyle, crime, safety and racial discrimination.
6. Geographic proximity to mainland China.

7. Social or educational links to family or friends living in the destination country, or family or friends studying there.
8. Immigration prospects after graduation.
9. Perceived higher standards of education and employment prospects.
10. Availability of scholarships for study.

A number of these elements, for example economic considerations, education standards in source and host countries and the possibility of permanent migration, operate as both *push* and *pull* factors. Two were highly significant for the students in this study; all expressed disillusionment with their education in China, and a desire to live in Australia permanently.

The influence of their parents in encouraging them to study abroad was also a key factor for these students, and this is consistent with the research. Mazzarol and Soutar (2002, p.351) emphasise that the decision to study abroad is often a family decision and parental influence is particularly strong among undergraduate students. This also emerged in Bodycott's (2009) study which identified and examined the factors mainland Chinese parents and students found most and least important when considering study abroad. Bodycott made the point that in a Confucian society such as the People's Republic of China (PRC), parents are often instrumental in decision making, but this has been somewhat overlooked in the research. However such research ignores cultural traditions steeped in Confucian ideals of family and the influence of parents; in traditional Confucian societies such as the PRC, major decisions related to education and future employment are taken by the family or even by parents alone (Bodycott & Lai, 2012, p.253.) In a 2009 study Bodycott interviewed parents as well as Chinese students and found significant differences between parents' and students' ratings of the *push* factors that trigger study abroad decisions. Parents generally rated factors such as an inadequate supply of university places in China, improved employment opportunities, immigration prospects and strong economic growth much

higher than students did, while the latter ranked the quality of their education and international experience more highly than the parent group. When parents and students were asked to rate *pull* factors that would help them choose a study destination, the parents ranked employment prospects, social and emotional support services, range of programs, and migration possibilities most highly of the 24 features offered, whereas the students placed more emphasis on the facilities, lifestyle and possibility of international experiences (pp. 360-361). Unlike the students in the Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) study, the students did not seem concerned with future migration prospects. Nor did they seem concerned with a number of the factors which emerged from Bodycott's (2009) review of the literature, such as future employment prospects and cost of living, knowledge of institution and destination or its closeness to China.

It could be argued that as China has modernized, the traditional influence of the family in decision-making may have waned, but this was not the case in the study by Bodycott and Lai (2012, p.252), which found in interviews with Chinese students that despite exponential financial and social development in contemporary Chinese society, traditional Confucian values were still largely upheld by parents, whose influence extended beyond initial decision making and impacted on students' social and academic well-being.

What has emerged from this brief review is that the decision to study abroad is often taken jointly by parents and prospective students and is a two-step process. First the decision to seek an international education is driven by *push* factors such as lack of education opportunities in the source country, economic and social issues including possible permanent residence in the host country, future employment opportunities, and a desire to experience life in the West. The second decision is where to study; the motivations for this are many and include personal recommendations from family and friends, knowledge and awareness of the host country and

economic issues such as the cost of fees and living expenses. The question of permanent migration also emerged as a *pull* factor for both parents and students.

Many of these factors were instrumental in helping the students in this study to come to Australia. The most influential were their desire to seek permanent residence and their parents' recommendations, but other factors emerged too, such as a perceived lack of discrimination, the cost of study, and future employment opportunities. An important additional element was that they had all enrolled in a Queensland Government foundation program with links to Australian universities.

2.5 ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AS A KEY TO STUDENT OUTCOMES

Without a degree of English language competence, international students will struggle to meet the demands of undergraduate study. Yet there seems to be a broad range of views as to what constitutes competency, and the level of English that non-English speaking background (NESB) students need at university. As Dunworth (2009) points out, the research literature has for many years debated the relationship between students' language proficiency and the quality and outcomes of the tertiary experience for them and their teachers. Nevertheless what seems apparent is that without an acceptable standard of language proficiency, students will struggle to achieve their academic aims. Additionally, English language skills are required for more than academic purposes. They are also critical to meet rigorous immigration standards when former students apply to stay in Australia permanently, and try to find jobs at a level appropriate to their academic qualifications. These are issues that affected all of the students in the study.

To explore the importance of language proficiency, this section first reviewed the literature that relates to the International English Language Test System (IELTS) as a predictor of academic success, before reviewing the pathway programs which providing additional language and

academic programs for students who have not achieved minimum language standards for direct university entrance.

2.5.1 IELTS as a predictor of academic success

Admission decisions for *English as a Second Language* (ESL) international students into Australian universities are made on two distinct but overlapping criteria; academic performance and English language proficiency (Murray & O'Loughlin, 2007, p.7; Phakiti, Hirsh & Woodrow, 2013, p.241). Language proficiency tests measure English competence at a given time and act in a gate-keeper capacity to ensure international students meet the minimum language entry for their selected programs of study (Hirsh, 2007, p.195). Widely-used to judge English language proficiency is IELTS, which assigns scores from 1 to 9 for each of the four macro skills, *Listening, Reading, Writing* and *Speaking*, and averages the results to produce an overall Band score. A Band 1 user has virtually no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words, while a Band 9 user is deemed to be expert, with fully operational command of language that is appropriate, accurate and fluent, with complete understanding (IELTS, 2013). IELTS guidelines indicate an IELTS score of 7.0 is 'probably acceptable' for linguistically demanding academic courses and 'acceptable' for linguistically less demanding courses (IELTS, 2006, p.5). Typically, Australian universities set a minimum IELTS 6.0 as an entry standard, although some tertiary institutions have adopted higher scores (Feast, 2002; Bretag, 2007). The IELTS standards describe a Band 6.0 user as competent with a generally effective command of the language, who, particularly in familiar situations, can employ and understand fairly complex language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings (IELTS, 2013). IELTS guidelines however recommend further English language study for holders of IELTS 6.0 who undertake academic courses (IELTS, 2006, p.5). As Feast (2002, p.71) points out, 'it is clear that significant numbers of students are being admitted to Australian universities at a level below that suggested as acceptable by IELTS Australia.' This can be exacerbated when international students who have not met the 'competent' IELTS 6.0 language

standard undertake pathway language courses and then start their tertiary studies without having to complete another IELTS test. The implications will be discussed in the next section.

Feast's investigation (2002, p.70) into the relationship between English language proficiency measured by IELTS scores and performance at university measured by Grade Point Averages (GPA) found a significant and positive, but weak relationship. However her literature review investigating the link between linguistic competence and academic success produced inconsistent findings. She cited a number of studies (for example by Criper & Davis, 1988; Elder, 1993; Ferguson & White, 1993; Kerstjens & Nery, 2000) which found results similar to hers; a weak positive association between IELTS and GPA. However a study at the University of Melbourne by Hill, Scorch and Lynch (1999, p.55) found the relationship between GPA and an IELTS score was moderately strong. Kerstjens and Nery's (2000) investigation into the relationship between the IELTS test and academic outcomes, particularly the extent to which IELTS levels predict academic levels and language difficulties of international students at Australian institutions, found the *Reading* score was the only significant test of academic performance. This is not dissimilar to a finding by Cotton and Conrow (1998) who analysed IELTS scores with three measures of performance; GPAs, lecturers' assessments and student self-assessment and found no significant correlations for IELTS global scores but weak positive correlations for the *Reading* and *Writing* sub-tests, with the *Reading* sub-test best able to predict subsequent performance. Humphreys, Haugh, Fenton-Smith, Lobo, Michael, and Walkinshaw (2012, p.9) also found the literature presented contradictory findings. Their investigation into the relationship between IELTS scores and GPA found *Listening* and *Reading* were strongly correlated with GPA in the first semester of study, while *Speaking* and *Writing* were not. The strong correlation between *Listening* and *Reading* was maintained in participants' second semester of study, but not in their third. This finding indicated a relationship between language proficiency test scores and academic achievement for students in their first year of study, but primarily with the receptive macro-skills

(that is, *Listening* and *Reading*) (p.1). This is consistent with the results of the study by Hill, Storch, and Lynch (p.71) which found that despite a moderately strong relationship between English language proficiency (as measured by IELTS) and academic success, the predictive relationship was not strong. Dooey and Oliver (2002) also found little evidence that IELTS was an effective predictor of academic success, with language just one of many important contributing factors. Their study found 85% of a group of 20 students admitted to university despite not demonstrating the minimum IELTS entry level had nevertheless been successful in their first year of study.

This has been a major thrust of the literature; that IELTS is not a strong predictor of international student academic performance (Phakiti et al., 2013). O'Loughlin (2008) says IELTS results reflect English proficiency alone and are unlikely, in themselves, to be accurate predictors of academic success. This is not to say language proficiency is not important; being able to understand the language of instruction is clearly critical. As Hill et al. (1999, p.72) write, 'Nobody would argue that ELP (English language proficiency) has no role to play in academic achievement.' However while it is critical, international students' academic success is also dependent on other factors such as self-regulation, motivation, cultural and personal values and levels of study engagement (Phakiti et al., 2013), financial support, adequate study skills and the use of English outside the classroom (O'Loughlin, 2008) and personal, cultural and academic background factors, teaching and support, and the ability of teaching staff (Feast, 2002, p.72). Another factor is the amount of language assistance NESB students avail themselves of during their study. O'Loughlin and Arkoudis's (2009) investigation of IELTS exit score gains in higher education found the degree of English language support students sought, and the degree of contact they had with English outside the university, strongly influenced their English language improvement.

Certainly the sense among many academics is that language competence is fundamental. In Dunworth's (2009) study into the use of and attitudes towards post-entry English language

assessments (PELAs), key teaching and learning staff in Australian universities indicated a clear causal link between students' ability to use language and their academic success or failure. In their study of international students at the University of Melbourne, Ingram and Bayliss (2007) compared academic staff perceptions of the language adequacy of their students with their IELTS band scores and found students whom academic staff believed to have adequate language also had the highest IELTS scores. They also found students whose language was assessed as being inadequate for academic study all had proficiency levels below the IELTS standard recommended by the IELTS partners. Bretag's (2007) study interviewed lecturers, deans and academic advisers at ten Australian universities. All stated that international *English as an Additional Language* (EAL) students generally had inadequate English communication skills for study at the tertiary level in Australia.

Concerns with the language capacity of international students have been voiced for a number of years and particularly after Birrell's (2006) study of the English standards of migrants granted permanent residence (PR) visas in 2005-2006, with particular reference to former overseas students who had completed tertiary courses in Australia. The study found around a third did not achieve a 'competent' Band 6.0 English standard, raising questions about how overseas students with poor English gained entry to Australian universities in the first place, and how they completed their studies when their English proficiency was at a level below the 'competent' standard (p.53). Prior to 2004, permanent residence applicants were not required to provide current IELTS test results, because it was assumed that as former students they would have met the 'competent' language standards to secure a student visa and would have further developed their English during their time in Australia . However migration officers observed some applicants' language skills were not 'competent' and the regulations subsequently changed (Birrell, 2006, pp. 58-59). The results from the first complete year of testing in 2005-2006 were confounding; more than a third of candidates (34.1%) did not achieve the 'competent' Band 6.0 English standard on each of the

four sub-tests. The figures were even more disturbing for Chinese applicants; 43% had language levels below the 'competent' Band 6.0 required for university entrance (Birrell, 2006, pp. 58-59). This begs the question; how did these students gain access to university in the first place? Additionally, how did they complete their university education with a language standard described in the IELTS band descriptors as modest, with only partial command of the language (IELTS, 2013)?

One possible explanation is that students whose IELTS level was below university entry standards took short language courses through pathway providers to enter university. Without having to take another IELTS test on completion to ensure their English had developed to the required level, it is possible these students completed their tertiary studies at a sub-optimum level.

Whether there should be an assessment of English proficiency for students exiting an English-language higher education course has been the topic of debate in recent years (O'Loughlin and Arkoudis, 2009, p.2), with the literature on exit testing revealing mixed views in the English language academic community (Humphreys & Mousavi, 2010, p.10). O'Loughlin and Arkoudis suggest a number of circumstances where such assessments could be useful. Exit tests could act as a measure of accountability to institutions, in that they would demonstrate students' language proficiency. They could inform curriculum development, in terms of the priority placed on English language development. They could also be used by prospective employers to gauge an applicant's language competence, and by the students themselves, as a measure of their language progress during their studies. However other researchers argue exit testing may have negative effects and question whether students should be required to demonstrate their language proficiency at the end of their course of study, after having met a language condition for entry (Humphreys & Mousavi, 2010). This may be a valid point, if in fact students can demonstrate they have met their institutions' language entry requirements. However, as will be discussed in the next section,

many students enter university through pathway programs that enable them to commence tertiary studies without being able to demonstrate the required entry level proficiency.

2.5.2 Pathway programs

Applicants from certain countries including China who seek higher education student visas to directly enter into Australian universities must demonstrate a minimum overall band score of IELTS 6.0, or possess an IELTS Band 5.0 and undertake an additional maximum of 30 weeks of English language training (Murray & O'Loughlin, 2007). Around 40% of overseas students take English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) as their pathway into tertiary study. Some 49,542 international students completed an ELICOS program for the first time in 2011, and more than a third (around 16,500) moved immediately to *Higher Education.* A comparison of the top ten nationalities and their pathways into tertiary study reveals that about three-quarters of China's 16,898 ELICOS students (about 12,700) went on to Higher Education (AEI, 2013 [6]).

Table 4: Top 10 nationalities and their study pathway from ELICOS 2011

Nationality	ELICOS to Higher Education % Proportion of total	Total students
China	73.6	16,898
Brazil	1.7	4,256
Republic of Korea	19.5	3,831
Thailand	18.3	2,623
Japan	8.3	2,443
Vietnam	51.6	2,215
Colombia	11.7	1,832
Saudi Arabia	39.0	1,645
Indonesia	32.1	1,206
Taiwan	29.3	1,141

Source: Australian Educational International, (2013 [6], p.3).

Another pathway is through secondary education, and almost half of the 3,875 Chinese students enrolled in Australian high schools used this route as a pathway into Higher Education in 2011 (AEI, 2013 [6] p.5).

Murray and O'Loughlin (2007), in describing pathways as both a feature and strength of Australia's international education offerings, say progression through pathways to higher level study has proven to be a very popular mode of entry for international students. This isn't surprising. Commonly, students who complete such programs are not required to undertake further IELTS testing before commencing their tertiary studies. As Hirsh (2007) points out, students whose English level is below that stipulated by an institution's admission requirements can undertake further study in programs offered by or in association with a university, thus providing a direct pathway into that institution (Hirsh, 2007). A background paper for the 2007 National Symposium on the English Language Competence of International Students found a significant proportion of students in pathway programs could be admitted to the higher level institution without needing to meet the formal requirement of taking an IELTS test and achieving the specified minimum band scores. These students are generally admitted on the proviso that they meet other accepted "standards" of English proficiency through their pathway studies (Murray & O'Loughlin, 2007). According to Birrell (2006, p.62) universities presume that these pathway programs deliver students with the requisite English skills. In arguing that this assumption is unjustified, Birrell cited the 2005 immigration statistics that found over a third of graduates seeking PR failed to meet university English language entrance standards.

Fox (2004, p. 437) points out that the relationship between language tests and academic performance has a problematic and troubling history which the language testing community continues to debate, particularly where language tests serve as 'gate-keepers' that allow or deny access to university. As Hirsh (2007) observes, a recurring question in both academic and wider circles is whether tertiary institutions are getting it right with their language requirements for international students. While the literature is ambivalent about the use of IELTS scores as predictors of future academic success, the test is nevertheless a measure of language competence at a particular point in time. This is not to say that pathway programs don't rigorously test

international students on completion of their mandatory language studies, or that their programs are in any way deficient. Pathway students may be entering their degrees through a more comprehensive development of English language and academic preparation skills after taking these courses, as opposed to simply gaining a language proficiency score (Murray & O'Loughlin, 2007). However the lack of a standardized curriculum and testing (Murray & O'Loughlin, 2007) may in fact mean that students are commencing their undergraduate degrees with English levels that fall below the recommended level. As Hirsh (2007, p.195) notes, 'universities positioning themselves at the low end with language entry requirements may be accepting some international students who, in order to achieve satisfactory grades, are faced with considerably greater language burdens than other students.'

The publication in 2009 of the 'Good Practice Principles for English language proficiency for International students' developed by an Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) steering committee, has helped address some of the quality issues in the English Language pathways sector. Of the ten principles, Principle Four addresses pathways provision directly, and recommends that 'Universities ensure that the English language pathways they approve for the admission of students enable these students to participate effectively in their studies' (AUQA, 2009, p.6). The accompanying explanatory notes point out that universities set their own entry standards and many students who enter through pathways do not need to take a recognised test of English language proficiency to meet language entry requirements. Because it is practically impossible to equate these means with English language test scores, universities need to find other ways of ensuring pathway students have the skills to participate effectively in their studies (AUQA, 2009, p.6). As Barrett-Lennard, Dunworth and Harris (2011, A-99) note, while the Good Practice Principles provide a framework for action in the area of academic language and learning, the means by which they will be achieved are not yet certain, and in that context they should be seen as a starter gun and not a silver bullet.

The language proficiency of international students is a concern for tertiary institutions both in Australia and overseas and diagnostic language assessment tools are being used widely to identify and address language issues among students who have already gained university entry. In Australia, post entry language assessments (PELAs) have been or are being adopted in most universities (Dunworth, 2009) following a recommendation by the 2007 National Symposium on the English Language Competence of International Students that English language diagnostic tests including post-entry assessment be used more widely (AEI, 2007). One of the most well-known and established is the University of Melbourne's Diagnostic English Language Assessment (DELA), which tests reading, writing and listening. The DELA has been subjected to rigorous validation processes and independent examination and has been adapted by Australian universities such as the University of South Australia and Monash University, and New Zealand's University of Auckland (Association for Academic Language and Learning [AALL], n.d.).

Like tertiary institutions in Australia, New Zealand universities are challenged by the needs of low language level international students. Additionally, non-English speaking background students whose families migrated to New Zealand when it liberalised its migration policy in the late 1980s, and students from Pacific Nation communities who are conversationally proficient but have low-level academic literacy, are also at risk. The University of Auckland requires all first-year undergraduate students, irrespective of their language background, to take the two-phase screening and diagnostic program, Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment (DELNA), to identify students with low language levels and recommend strategies to assist them (Read, 2008).

Post entry language assessment has the potential to identify areas of need at an early stage of a student's academic career and can help to effectively target available resources and raise awareness of the importance of language development. However PELAs are not without disadvantages. Learning opportunities must be provided for students identified as needing

language development and as a consequence, implementing post entry language assessment can be extremely resource-heavy. It can also potentially stigmatise certain student groups and reinforce a 'deficit' approach to student English use (AALL, n.d.).

2.6 STUDENT INTEGRATION

Studies that review factors that motivate international students to study abroad have identified that students want to gain a better understanding of the 'West' (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002, p.88) and gain 'international experience' (Bodycott, 2009, p.361). Implicit in those statements is that international students expect to have contact with local people. Yet the lack of integration between overseas and domestic students and into broader Australian society is well documented. As Bennett, Volet, and Fozdar (2013, p.533) point out, 'the literature overwhelmingly suggests that in institutions where English is the language of instruction, monolingual local students rarely mix with international students who are not fully proficient in English.' Smart, Volet, and Ang (2000, p.8) found international students who had anticipated greater mixing and establishing of friendships with Australian students were disappointed by the level of contact, and international students commonly expressed disappointment that they had not met and formed close friendships with Australian students, visited Australian homes and experienced the local culture first hand.

On commencing university, students must not only adapt to a new academic environment, but to a new social environment as well (Peat, Dalziel, & Grant, 2001). Social networks are a key factor in enabling students to make a successful transition to university (Glaser, Hall, & Halperin, 2006), a position endorsed by Campbell (2012) who believes social networks are important because they reduce students' isolation and increase their sense of belonging. In Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, and Ramia's (2008) study into international student security, two thirds of the 200 international students interviewed had experienced problems of loneliness and or isolation, with

most preferring to seek support from friends rather than rely on institutional assistance. This is similar to Wesley's (2009) view; that foreign students face significant barriers to becoming involved in campus life and face either isolation or gravitation towards other students of the same nationality. However Sawir et al. (2008) argue same-culture networks function as ghettos that block the potential for a richer educational, social and cultural experience; they advocate university intervention to encourage local students to be more open to and curious about the lives and values of international students. Marginson (2008, as cited in Owens & Loomes, 2012) believes the comparative disinterest and or inexperience of Australian students in relation to overseas study and study of second languages may also partly explain their reported reluctance or inability to interact effectively with their international colleagues, despite international students wanting to make local friends. Marginson (2008) and Sawir et al. (2008) acknowledge that Australian universities with mixed cohorts undertake various activities in and out of the classrooms to encourage interaction, but say these have limited success. They further contend that Australian students and teachers may not yet fully appreciate or be able to exploit the resource and opportunity international students bring to the domestic university learning and teaching context. Owens and Loomes's (2012) study disputes these findings. They claim academics at Central Queensland University [CQU] are experts in anticipating the needs of international students and cite high levels of student satisfaction with a two-year social integration program run by CQU at its campuses in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Melbourne and Sydney, in partnership with the local community, staff and other students. However it is not unreasonable to question the long-term benefits of this program given, as Owens and Loomes themselves point out, 'few domestic students study at these city-based campuses, so despite the best efforts of campus staff, the absence of a domestic cohort may be perceived as a dilemma for the institution' (p. 279).

Smart, Volet, and Ang (2000, pp. 8-9) also argue there are sound reasons for ensuring integration between international and domestic students. First, Australia has a vested interest in securing a reputation as a safe and friendly haven for students, important to keep students looking to Australia as a study destination. More compelling are the sound educational benefits to be gained from integration. In education terms, opportunities for personal, social and cultural growth and enrichment are being wasted if domestic and international students progress in two parallel and non-communicative streams. Dalglish and Chan (2005) came to the same conclusion, noting that many international students spend their time with other students from the same language group and similar cultural background, as do Australian students. As they point out, 'many international students who come to study in Australia, learn about Australian business practices in the classroom but gain no practical experience of what Australian business, or in fact Australians, are like' (p.2).

Clearly, providing support networks to help young international students, many still in their late teens or early twenties, is essential to assist them in overcoming the significant challenges they face in leaving home to study in a second language environment. In addition there's a risk of a double jeopardy if Australian universities do not actively and consistently promote integration between overseas and local student cohorts. Domestic students may not reap the considerable benefits such as exposure to new ideas, experiences and cultures that a diverse cohort brings, and in a globalized world this equates to opportunities lost. Secondly, satisfied international students relay their experiences to their contemporaries in their home countries, providing marketing that is both effective and cost-effective in the highly competitive international education sector. As Wesley (2009, p.1) points out, 'students who return to their countries with negative experiences could become a poisoned alumni, conveying critical attitudes in other countries about Australian society and poor impressions about Australia's reputation as an education provider. They could ultimately destroy a strong export product.'

International students not only face the same problems and challenges any student faces but also have the added issues related to living in an unfamiliar cultural environment and studying in a different educational system and language. It is well documented that the sense of disorientation, and sometimes alienation, felt can be overwhelming (Campbell, 2012, p.206). However it should be noted that domestic students are not immune from similar difficulties. James, Krause, and Jennings (2010) surveyed students from nine Australian tertiary institutions to investigate their first year experience at university. The report identified factors associated with low achievement and risk of failure common to both overseas and domestic students, including pressure from financial commitments, perceived lack of social support, lack of preparation for university study, and excessive hours of paid work (p.2). It also found a small but persistent proportion of first year students who were very disengaged and appeared highly dissatisfied (p.6).

Bexley, Daroesman, Arkoudis, and James's (2013, pp. 7-8) survey of university student finances examined domestic and international students' perceptions of their financial security and found domestic students were experiencing far greater levels of financial distress since the last time the survey was administered in 2006. Concern about finances also troubled international students; although their mean average income was 5% higher than domestic students', half the overseas cohort was worried about money (compared with almost 70% of full time domestic students). The report found pockets of significant hardship in the international student population, with around a quarter reporting incomes of less than $10,000 per annum. Around a fifth of domestic students had a similar income level. The study also found increased hours of work affected both domestic and international students' educational experience, with half saying that work adversely affected their performance at university, and one in three domestic undergraduates and one in six international students regularly missing classes because of work, an issue also identified by James, Krause, and Jennings (2010). In the face of these concerns it is little wonder the two cohorts find little time to mix socially.

2.7 IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ON AUSTRALIA'S TERTIARY ENVIRONMENT

The introduction of full fee-paying international students in the mid-1980s changed the face of Australia's universities. AEI data indicate 218,001 of Australia's 1,107,509 total tertiary enrolments in 2012 were overseas students studying onshore ([7] 2013). Smart, Volet, and Ang (2000, p.8) have identified that in some university business schools, international students form almost half the entire student cohort. Administratively, large international offices and student support services have been established, senior positions such as pro-vice chancellor (international) or similar have been created and almost all universities now have mission statements highlighting internationalisation as a goal.

The push to recruit international students to Australian universities is not surprising, given the economic imperative, coupled with a global trend, particularly in Asia, for students to complete their tertiary studies overseas. As Dalglish and Chan (2005, p.1) point out, 'tertiary education, and business education in particular, has become increasingly 'internationalised'. That is, students appear to be increasingly willing to move country to gain their post-school education'.

The economic imperative flowed from universities' need to find alternative sources of revenue. From the mid-1990s income from international education began to become a substitute income for declining public funding of the tertiary sector (Wesley, 2009); between 1995 to 2003 Australia's public share of total expenditure on tertiary education fell by 16.8 per cent and universities looked to full fee paying overseas students to make up the shortfall (Bretag, 2007).

Paradoxically, the quality of the 'product', an Australian university education based on internationally recognised standards of academic excellence, was undermined by a rush to recruit students who may not have been adequately prepared for a new academic environment in a second language (Bretag, 2007, p.13). Robertson, Line, Jones and Thomas (2000, pp. 94-95)

surveyed international students to probe issues faced by them; among the most common were feelings of isolation, unfriendly and inexperienced lecturers, and language related problems. Academic staff were also surveyed; among issues they raised were overseas students' reluctance to contribute to discussion, their difficulty in understanding lectures and interpreting and understanding spoken English, their over-reliance on books, their not taking responsibility for their own work, having little appreciation of critical thinking and not understanding the concept of plagiarism. One interviewee made the comment that international students needed to learn written and spoken Australian discourse conventions (p.98). Robertson et al. (2000) suggest that these responses indicate a shortfall in empathy shown by academics to NESB students. Certainly they are not consistent with the Good Practices Principles in Practice: Teaching Across Cultures' Quick Guide to Effective Professional Development of Teachers (International Education Association of Australia [IEAA], 2013) which advocate in part that 'effective teachers respect and make adjustments for diversity arising from students' cultural backgrounds' (p.4) and recommend on-going organised programs for professional development which focus on teaching across cultures. Both sets of responses to the survey highlight the challenges inherent in international education, not just for overseas students, but for the academics who teach them.

Most universities now offer language support services but it is not uncommon for these to be situated as independent units outside the academic discipline. This is despite recent research which demonstrates the necessity of integrating language learning into core subject areas (see for example Kennelly, Maldoni, & Davies, 2010; Briguglio, 2011; Harris & Ashton, 2011; Stratilas, 2011). Discipline lecturers therefore have become the contact point for international students trying to understand and develop their language skills (Arkoudis & Tran, 2010, p.169). Kingston and Forland's (2008) research with East Asian students and academic staff at a London university found support from lecturers as being 'very important' to the students in aiding and clarifying learning (p. 214) although the lecturers varied greatly in the level and manner of support they

provided. The students reported inconsistencies between academic staff teaching styles and gaps in expectations between staff and international students, highlighting the need for traditional teaching methods to be constantly monitored and modernized to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body. Another of their findings was that there was a lack of guidance for staff who teach international students (p.217). Dalglish and Chan (2005) imply that academics may need to adjust their teaching and learning strategies to encourage international student participation. Traditionally, university classrooms use a range of Western teaching and learning strategies that focus on critical analysis, oral discussion, problem solving and the possibility of multiple solutions using case studies and discussion groups that require active participation by the students. Because these strategies are unfamiliar, international students may not participate and this constrains classroom interaction and learning (p.2).

While the quest for international education revenue is a reasonable reaction to public under-funding of the tertiary sector, concerns have been raised about lowered academic standards and the additional pressures it places on academics. Bretag's (2007) study into plagiarism interviewed 14 academics at 10 Australian universities. Half said they felt pressure from their university, either implicit or explicit, to 'soft mark' fee-paying students, allowing them to pass or to plagiarise. Foster's (2011) analysis of data from business faculties of two Australian universities which compared tutorial results of international, Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) and domestic students seemed to endorse the view that academic standards are lowered in classes with high proportions of international students. She also found differences in marks gained by the two cohorts.

> I find strong evidence that both international students and students from non-English speaking backgrounds earn persistently lower marks at university than other students. I also find that higher concentrations of international NESB students in courses - controlling for course fixed effects - buoys up the marks of international NESB students in those courses. The most logical explanation for this effect is a course-wide downward adjustment in the grading standards applied to these students (p.17).

Given that 'Management and Commerce', which includes study fields such as *Accounting, Business and Management*, and *Sales and Marketing*, was the largest broad field of education in 2010, with about half of enrolments and commencements (ABS, 2012), the impact of these findings is significant. Generalised across the sector, it could be argued the marks of half of the graduates of Australian business schools have been inflated.

With regard to academic plagiarism, all respondents in Bretag's (2007) study indicated that the commercialized environment impinged on universities' reaction to plagiarism, and plagiarism appeals from international students were treated differently from those of domestic students. Bretag's study found other pressures on Australian academics. She found that while academics know from experience that for students to succeed they need to be fluent in the language of instruction, it is almost heretical for them to voice this opinion in a climate where international education contributes so much to the Australian economy. Her research also indicated that lecturers feel they are pressured to pass sub-standard work, and when they apply penalties for serious academic misconduct (that is, plagiarism), their decisions can be overturned without their agreement or even knowledge. The same academics are then nervous about publically confronting such intervention, for fear of damaging their careers. She argues that any discussion about language competence needs to be accompanied by a discussion about academic authority and freedom (2007, pp.18-19).

Coates, Dobson, Goedegebuure, and Meek (2009) found a further pressure on university academics; teaching staff numbers have failed to keep pace with growth in student enrolments. They compared increases in the number of equivalent full-time students and teaching staff to reveal the widening gap. Between 1989 and 2007 full-time equivalent (FTE) student numbers almost doubled from 376,000 to nearly 726,000. Nearly half of this increase was in international students, numbers of which increased from 19,000 (or 5% of the total) in 1989 to around 197,000 (or 27%) in 2007. In the same period teaching staff, including those employed casually, increased

by about 8,400 from 25,060 full-time equivalent staff in 1989 to 33,496 in 2007, an increase of about 34%. This lag in teaching staff numbers increased the ratio of students to teaching staff from almost 14 per teacher to nearly 22 (Coates et al., 2009, pp. 47-48). The University of Melbourne (2011) also reported an increase in student/staff ratios, from 13 to one to 20 to one in the last 20 years, a situation they attribute to declining real funding for Commonwealth-supported students. This is an issue that impacts the Australian tertiary environment in that it puts further pressure on academics at a time when they are being asked to take more responsibility for the language needs of the NESB students in their classrooms. The University of Melbourne (2011) in lobbying for increased government spending, argued that student/staff ratios reduce opportunities for interaction between students and staff, making it less likely that students will reach their full academic potential and putting in doubt the capacity of universities to meet fully local and international standards. Combined with new domestic participation targets, the outcome is that an over-stretched academic workforce will be poorly placed to deal with new students who are less well-prepared for higher education than most current students (p.9).

Most of the studies about teaching and learning in international education have focused on the needs of students and there seems a lack of research about the impact of large numbers of overseas studies on the academics who teach them. Interviews conducted with lecturers as a component of this dissertation will add their voice to the literature.

2.8 CONCLUSION

This literature review reviewed the history and social and economic impact of international education, the motivations that drive overseas students offshore for tertiary education, the importance of English proficiency in helping them achieve their objectives, and the benefits but difficulties of integrating domestic and international students. It also looked at some of the

challenges inherent in an internationalised tertiary environment, with a particular emphasis on the perspectives of the academics in Australia's universities.

Most of the topics that emerged from the Literature Review may have affected the experience of students in this study, and also the other groups of interviewees whose opinions were sought. English proficiency was the underlying issue that permeated all of the discussions. It affected the students' academic performance, challenged the language advisers and frustrated the discipline academics. It also presented a pragmatic dilemma for senior university management; what impact would adherence to their published English language thresholds have on their international education revenue stream? The failure of domestic and international students to mix was another issue that confronted all groups. All saw it as important, and all felt there was a way to go before the two cohorts got together. The implications will be examined in more detail in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Numerous recent studies (for example, Dalglish & Chan, 2005; Benzie, 2011; Briguglio & Smith, 2012; to name just a few) have examined the role of international education and the needs of international students. In 2012 a major quantitative study commissioned by Australian Education International to gauge international student satisfaction reported overwhelmingly positive results (AEI, 2013 [5]). However the literature (for example Birrell, 2006; Arkoudis & Tran, 2007) indicates that significant problems confront international students when they leave their country of origin to study in a foreign country. In order to look more deeply into those issues, this study adopts an ethnographic approach probing the motivations and experience of a small group of Chinese students who came to Australia to complete tertiary studies. Interviews, observation and engagement with five Chinese students formed the core of this study.

Since international education became a growth industry for Australia, the demographic makeup of universities has changed (Walters, 2011) and this in turn has changed the nature of education, both from the perspectives of those who support students and the key administrators responsible for developing strategies and allocating resources to accommodate an expanded student cohort. Therefore it seemed important to gauge their views and interviews were conducted with those who influence international students' experiences; the advisers who assist them with language issues, the discipline academics who teach them and senior university administrators whose decisions affect them.

Grounded theory and domain analysis were the investigative methods used to analyse the resultant data.

3.2 METHOD

Using a qualitative research paradigm, this longitudinal study began in 2005 with observations of the students at the centre of the research and ended almost nine years later when they had finished their tertiary study, and data from other relevant sources had been collected. These data included interviews with the academic language and learning advisers who assist tertiary students with language development, the discipline academics who teach them, and senior university management. The research began as a case study, described by Creswell (2008) as a method which conducts an in-depth exploration of an activity, event, process or individuals, separated for the purposes of the research by time, place or some physical boundaries. Using qualitative and quantitative data gathering methods, the study's purpose was to document the experiences of five Chinese students studying for degrees in Australia. Creswell's case study methodology met all of his stated criteria for this type of research; its aim was to investigate the experiences of individuals (the students), separated by time (the period of their studies), place and physical boundaries (Australia). As the research progressed, a relatively minor variation in approach changed the research methodology from case study to ethnography. Initially it was planned to include quantitative data including results from the students' foundation program in China. However the information they provided in their first interviews, coupled with what I already knew about them and subsequent observations of their adaptation to Western education and culture, led me to question the relevance of this earlier material, and instead I decided to focus exclusively on observations, interviews and conversation, the common data collection methods of ethnography.

Researchers such as Hall (2008) and Willis (2007) argue that the two methods, case study and ethnography, are closely linked. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) the term 'ethnography' is both variable and contested and overlaps with qualitative research such as field work or case study. However Hall (2008) argues that case study is a *type* of ethnography, with

both sharing many common characteristics; both focus on a social phenomenon, studied in context in a natural setting, using a range of data collection methods. A distinction identified by Hall (2008) is that case study research uses a variety of qualitative and quantitative data sources, while ethnography tends to understand social groups through observations of them. This focus on observation coupled with interviews with the students and related participants was consistent with the approach I believed would achieve the aims of my study. As Creswell (2008) points out, ethnographers collect data through spending time at participants' sites where they live, work or play and that was the nature of my data collection with the students. My interaction with them spanned almost nine years, from the time they enrolled in the foundation program in China to the present. Having met them first in 2005, and having taught them for a year, I was well placed to take an observer role as I interacted with them and witnessed their approach to their studies and their individual strengths and weaknesses. My role at this time could not be described as a participant observer; as the academic principal of the foundation program they attended, as well as being their teacher, there were boundaries between us, particularly as they were used to having a more formal relationship with their teachers. I had not at that time recruited students to the study and indeed, had not fully framed the nature of the research. At that point, my concern was simply whether these students, with their quite rudimentary command of English, could within a year progress to a point where they were ready to study in an English language university; it was this thought that evolved into this project. This progression, and other aspects of the study, are consistent with the ethnographic approach, defined by O'Reilly (2012, p.11) as a practice that evolves in design as a study progresses and involves direct and sustained contact with human beings, in the context of their daily lives, over a prolonged period of time.

The relationship between the students and me continued after they moved to Australia in 2006, although its nature changed. I was the only Western adult they knew and therefore the only person to whom they could initially go for advice and guidance. Consequently the power distance

between us narrowed and our relationship became more equal as our interaction moved from teacher/student to confidante and friend. By this time my research questions were more fully formed and the students had been recruited to the study, and my approach also changed from observing the group as a requirement of my teacher role, to overt participant observation. O'Reilly (2012, p.108) argues that the contemporary role of participation in ethnography ranges from spending some time in the community being studied in order to gain access, to full immersion in the culture of the group, with much participation taking place somewhere between these two extremes. My level of participation throughout has been closer to the start of that continuum.

Creswell (2008), in describing how case study researchers go about their investigations, says they may be more interested in describing a group's activities, whereas ethnographers look for shared patterns that develop as the group interacts over time. This distinction seemed important; as the student interviews progressed, shared patterns began to emerge and the study became more than simply a description of the group's actions and experiences. What also became increasingly evident as data collection with the students progressed is that there were other participants whose roles impacted on the students' experience and on the broader academic environment, and that the perspective of these additional participants would add richness and depth to the study. This additional facet seemed to fit a more ethnographic approach which has been described as an ongoing attempt to place specific encounters, events and understandings in a fuller, more meaningful context (Tedlock, 2000). Briguglio and Smith (2012) agree the ethnographic approach is biassed towards understanding things from the informants' perspective, and this has been a key emphasis of my study. Despite incorporating data from other sources, the students' perspective has always been paramount. Baszanger and Dodier (1997) are of the view that a study becomes ethnographic when the fieldworker is careful to connect the facts that s/he observes with the specific features of the *backdrop* against which these facts occur, which are linked to historical and

cultural contingencies. This view is supported by O'Reilly (2012), who proposes that ethnography should be informed by a theory of practice that examines social life as it unfolds, including looking at how people feel, in the context of their communities, and with some analysis of wider structures, over time. That is what this research has sought to achieve, with the students as the focus, and the backdrop or context provided by the different specialists with whom international students come into contact, and who influence their experiences and outcomes.

3.3 THE PARTICIPANTS

3.3.1 The students

Described more fully in Chapter 4, the students who are the principal focus of this study were born in China and completed a Queensland Government *Unilearn* pre-university pathway program at Langfang in northern China in 2006 before coming to Australia to study. I was employed by the Queensland Government's Chinese delivery partner as its academic principal, and also taught the students English and Business Studies. More usually, students changed teachers each term, but I remained with the class for the four terms of the year-long program because it was operationally efficient in allowing me to concurrently perform my head teacher role while enabling me to develop the relationship with the students which would lay the foundation for my research. Consequently I got to know them quite well, both in terms of their academic performance and their personal characteristics.

At the outset, the research was intended to follow the academic careers of four students only. Participants in the study self-selected after an invitation to participate was issued to the 25 class members. The offer was issued after the students had completed their foundation year and their results had been finalized and published. This timing was important so as not to risk influencing the students' willingness to take part or sway their responses, by recruiting them prior to their completing their studies. The ten students who initially volunteered were asked to provide

information about their previous education, their current IELTS language level, and their reasons for wanting to study abroad, to enable me to get a better understanding of their backgrounds and ambitions. Three students (all male) essentially removed themselves from the study by failing to respond, leaving three males and four females. Data collection began with the seven, to counter the probability that not all would continue. This is in fact what happened. One student, William, who had had a marginal pass in his foundation studies, scored an IELTS 5.5 in a test he took after finishing the foundation program and after additional English studies in Australia commenced an undergraduate degree. Conversations with him during his first year in Australia indicated that his language had not progressed significantly and this view was further confirmed when he wrote me a five-line email which contained 37 grammar and syntax errors. Despite evidence of language problems, William passed most subjects and samples of his academic papers showed them to be written at near native-speaker level. After maintaining strongly that the assignments were his own work, when challenged he acknowledged that members of his church group had given him 'a little help'. Embarrassed that his deception had been exposed, William discontinued contact apart from an occasional text. A second student left the study for quite different reasons. Despite visa restrictions limiting the hours he could work, but unable to rely on financial support from his family, Keith took a full-time job as a truck driver with a Chinese company in Brisbane. The pressure of study and work meant Keith was rarely available and he reluctantly withdrew. The remaining five students, one male and four females, continued in the study until its conclusion.

3.3.2 The academic language and learning (ALL) advisers

Academic language and learning (ALL) advisers play a crucial role in assisting international students and others with sub-optimum English to develop their language skills. Four language advisers were asked to participate in the study, to provide their perspectives on the challenges faced by international students and on how to improve overseas students' experiences and outcomes. Most, if not all universities in Australia have ALL advisers working with their student cohorts

(Association of Academic Language and Learning [AALL], 2013). From this broad range, I chose the four in the study through a combination of four factors; I had become aware of their work; they had published in the field; their institutions had significant international student cohorts and they represented a broad geographic spread. A paper written by one of the advisers had come to my attention during my literature review and a search of her background revealed she was highly qualified to offer insight. Another interviewee presented a paper at an ALL conference that I attended; the paper touched on many of the issues that the students had been discussing. I actively sought the views of two more participants, both of whom had published in the field, after meeting them at the ALL conference and discussing issues in international education. All four interviewees represented institutions with large international student cohorts. A further consideration was their geographic location; keen not to represent the views of only one state or region, I interviewed advisers who worked at universities in Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia. Selecting interviewees in this way may appear a little arbitrary. However after reading their work, listening to their presentations and after conversations with them, I was of the view that those selected would contributed a wealth of information that would inform my study, and this proved to be the case (see Chapter 5).

3.3.3 The discipline academics

Of international enrolments and commencements in Higher Education in 2010, '*Management and Commerce*', which includes fields such as *Accounting*, *Business and Management*, and *Sales and Marketing*, was the largest broad field of education with more than 50% of international enrolments (ABS, 2012). Given that all of the students in the study had completed degrees in this field, I planned initially to interview four business lecturers from universities where the students had studied and from other institutions. However recruiting these academics proved more difficult than I had anticipated. The head of accounting at one university referred me to the head of the business school, who imposed so many conditions prior to giving permission for a staff

member to be interviewed that I had reservations that the interviewee would be able to elaborate on the questions which I was requested to provide. Emails to the head of school at a second university, and to a senior academic at another, went unanswered. I conducted interviews with accountancy lecturers at two other universities, but the interviews were so constrained I decided not to include them in this study. Ultimately the head of a university business school agreed to be interviewed and provided a frank and insightful discussion. Using contacts within various universities, I subsequently interviewed two business academics who agreed to speak to me on condition that no details of their location or specific titles would be included in the study. The findings from these three interviews are included in Chapter 6.

3.3.4 Senior university administrators

While International education has become a critical source of revenue for Australian universities recent economic and government policy changes put pressure on university administration, as student numbers began to fall. It therefore seemed important to the study to include the opinions of senior university administrators whose decisions influence the experiences of international students. Using personal contacts, three senior administrators at pro-vice chancellor (international) or equivalent level at Australian universities were invited to participate in the study. All agreed.

3.4 DATA GATHERING AND RECORDING

The use of interviewing to acquire information is so extensive today that it has been said that we live in an 'interview society' (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997; Silverman, 1993 as cited in Fontana & Frey, 2000, p.646). Interviews are among the most widely used methods of data generation in the social sciences according to Baker (1997, p.130), and I chose to interview participants as the prime data collection method used in this study. O'Reilly (2012, p.120) says ethnographic interviewing falls broadly into three categories:

a) Structured, where questions are predetermined and there is no room for more to be added.

b) Unstructured, where the interviewer may have a plan, but the interview is more like a free-flowing conversation.

c) Semi-structured, which contains elements of both styles, and which allows respondents to explore ideas.

Although O'Reilly (2012, p.118) believes ethnographic interviews are most likely to be unstructured, she acknowledges that there is no 'normal' within ethnography and ethnographers often also use some structured interviewing, to obtain more general data. Hall (2008, p.158) supports the use of semi-structured interviews when specific information needs to be collected from each participant, while at the same time allowing them the freedom to digress from or elaborate on issues that arise. Because I wanted to collect some common information from the participants I opted for the semi-structured format. Data from the students were collected primarily through three interviews, conducted at twelve to eighteen month intervals from 2007. The students were asked to provide information such as personal details, previous education and the like, before the interview moved to a more free-flowing conversation. A similar approach was also used for the other groups which contributed to the study, the Academic Language and Learning advisers, discipline academics and pro-vice chancellors (PVCs) international or their equivalents. I tended towards an open-ended question format to allow for a range of responses and to encourage the participants to talk freely. All of the interviews were designed to build on information gathered from other participants. For example, many of the observations made by the students were incorporated into the discussions with the ALL advisers, discipline academics and PVCs; information gathered from the students and ALL advisers helped inform the interviews with the discipline academics, while information from the three groups contributed to the discussions with the PVCs.

Each of the participants was given an information sheet (Appendix 1) and asked to sign a consent form (example, Appendix 2) which explained the purpose and methodology of the study and which also contained a confidentiality clause and a guarantee that participants would be identified only by a coded name. The participants were also given the right to withdraw from the study at any time. On completion of the study, data were depersonalised and will be held securely for five years.

Ethical review of the project was sought from Griffith University's Office of Research and was granted under GU Ref. EBL/45/08/HREC. Annual review was sought and granted until the completion of the data collection phase of the study on 30 June 2013, and subsequently extended to 28 February 2014 to ensure any further conversations with participants were included.
All interviews were recorded and transcribed, and are appended (Appendices 3-26).

As well as interviews, information gathering occurred in informal meetings, social gatherings, emails, texts and conversations with the students, and from information about the environment in which the ethnographic study was taking place (for example, from media reports, from conferences and from discussions with language teachers and academics who work in the field). My previous experience as the students' teacher also helped me scope the fields of enquiry.

3.4.1. Data gathering, students

I maintained regular contact with the students in the study, both by phone and email and through meetings and social gatherings with them and with a number of the other students from their class in Langfang, who had also come to Australia to study. Data gathered from observations and from conversations and emails were used to guide the three interviews and have been incorporated. Post-interview, students were asked, mostly via email but occasionally verbally, to clarify any ambiguities.

The interviews were deliberately quite long in duration and covered a range of topics, not all of which were strictly relevant to the study. Hall (2008) points out that 'semi-structured interviews are particularly useful in case studies as they allow the researcher to collect specific information from each participant while at the same time allowing them to elaborate on areas of the interview where reasons, intricacies and other ramifications of the topic can be revealed' (p.158) and this format also suited the ethnographic methodology of my study. Questions were largely open ended, because as Hall (2008) says, 'open ended questions give respondents the opportunity to elaborate on their answers by providing justifications, motivations or qualifications' (p.151). The extended interview approach was adopted because it was felt that it would help the students 'settle in' to the interviews, while allowing them to explore issues which they felt were important. The approach was useful in that some of the digressions threw up information that I had not anticipated but which was pertinent. This was consistent with Hall's view that open ended questions often reveal information not anticipated by the researcher. While unstructured interviewing can provide a greater breadth of data than other types of interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2000) it was necessary to add some structure in the form of questions to guide the interview, so that the same broad information could be canvassed with each of the participants.

O'Reilly (2012, p.125) says while the formality of an interview varies along a continuum from very informal to a more directed approach where the researcher is more obviously in control, ethnographic interviews are usually informal. Because my objective was to put the students at their ease, and to encourage them to speak freely, I opted for a high level of informality. Usually we met socially before the interviews, which were mostly conducted either in my home or in my hotel room when I was visiting their city of residence. In the periods before and between the interviews, the students and I were in regular communication either by telephone, email or personal contact and the information provided to me during those interactions provided some future direction to the subsequent interviews. Further contact after the interview phase allowed

me to put to them some of the issues that had come up during data collection with the other participants. From time to time, on re-listening to the audio of their interviews, it seemed that their comments could be ambiguous, or required a follow up question, and the regular communication with the students enabled me to clarify what they had said, or to inquire further. Hall (2008, p. 115) describes this as 'member checking', or a 'reality check' to guard against misinterpretation by the researcher.

Each of the three interviews lasted approximately one and a half hours, depending on the topic and the individual student's communication style. I tended to adopt a slightly different interview approach with each student, depending on what I had come to know about their personality. For example one student whom I perceived to be quiet by nature seemed to prefer answering more direct questions and this was the approach I took with her. However some of her answers tended to be quite short, so to evoke a fuller response I deliberately remained silent for a short time when she had finished speaking, to encourage her to extend her answer. This technique worked well. One of the students is particularly thoughtful and considered, not just in the interview context but in the classroom and in social situations as well. Giving this student time to think about his responses resulted in his providing what I felt was a quite significant degree of insightful comment. O'Reilly (2012, p.116) says it is quite difficult to prescribe how an ethnographer should conduct an interview, given that such interviews can take the shape of opportunistic chats, questions that arise on the spur of the moment, one-to-one in-depth interviews, group interviews and all sorts of ways of asking questions and learning about people that fall in between. Given that I had access to all these forms of information gathering with the students in the study, my approach was to use all the resources available in my contacts with them, while relying predominantly on data from the interviews.

Silverman (2001) describes three methods in the treatment of interview data. Positivism aims to generate data which hold independently of both the research setting and the researcher, emotionalism attempts to elicit authentic accounts of subjective experience, and constructivism treats what happens in an interview as a topic in its own right. My approach to the interview data tended towards emotionalism, described as aiming 'to access emotions by describing respondents' experiences, by encouraging interviewers to become emotionally involved with respondents and to convey their own feelings to both respondents and readers' (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997 p.58). In structuring my interviews with the students, I attempted to develop rapport, an approach that is consistent with Silverman's (2001) description of emotionalism.

> 'Emotionalist interviewers want to access the *subject* behind the person given the role of interview respondent. The particular concern is with *lived experience*. Emotions are treated as central to such experience' (p.90).
>
> .

Developing rapport was critical in encouraging the students to talk freely and frankly, but also from my position in terms of developing my understanding of their point of view because as Fontana and Frey (2000) contend, 'It is paramount that the researcher establish rapport with respondents; that is, the researcher must be able to take the role of the respondents and attempt to see the situation from their viewpoint, rather than superimpose his or her world of academia and preconceptions upon them' (p. 655).

Throughout, I maintained an awareness that interviews are interactional encounters and the nature of the social dynamic of the interview can shape the nature of the knowledge generated (Fontana & Frey, 2000). I was also mindful that interview participants can actively construct knowledge around questions and responses (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995) in what Schank and Abelson (as cited in Ryan & Bernard 2000, p.783) call scripts (or schemata) that enable culturally skilled people to fill in details of a story or event. Also aware of the problem of 'self-presentation' (presenting an ideal self), which Denzin (as cited by Silverman 2001, p.92) saw as a risk of

emotionalism, I attempted to negate this possibility by giving the students time to relax into the interviews so they could 'be themselves'. Over the course of the almost nine years of our association I had to come to know the students quite well and this was another counter to the problem of self-presentation. Nevertheless I was conscious the cultural and social differences between us would play a role in how they shared information with me and indeed, what information they shared. Academics such as Collins (as cited by Miller & Glassner, 1997, p.105) argue that researchers should 'have lived or experienced their material in some fashion' (p.232), but Miller and Glassner challenge that. Their perspective is that the existence of social differences does not mean that interviews are devoid of information about social worlds. Rather, they argue, interviews can be conducted in ways that put social differences to use in providing opportunities for individuals to articulate their feelings about their life experiences. They cite one particular example where social distance can be a benefit; interviewees can recognize themselves as experts on a topic of interest to someone typically in a more powerful position, either in terms of age, race or education. This can be both empowering and illuminating as it gives interviewees an opportunity to reflect on and speak about their lives, in ways not often available (Miller & Glassner, 1997, p.105). This was the sense that I had from my interviewees; rather than being intimidated by any perceived distance between us, they welcomed the opportunity to talk about their experiences and their future goals.

The first interviews with the students, conducted in Brisbane and in Sydney in mid-2007, collected personal information and data relating to the students' previous education experience, explored their motivations for leaving China, the influence of their parents, their reasons for choosing a particular course of study, their observations of other Chinese students, the help offered by their universities, and their early experiences of Australian education (see Appendices 3-7).

The second interviews, recorded in 2009, expanded on their early experiences in Australia, specifically on their living and work arrangements, their assimilation into Australian society, and the challenges that they and their friends and fellow international students experienced in their first two years here (see Appendices 8-12).

By the time the third interviews were recorded in the second half of 2010 and in 2011, the students had all completed undergraduate degrees and some had either completed, or were in the process of finishing master's degrees. The emphasis therefore was on their Australian education experience, their perceptions of 'value for money' in terms of outcomes versus costs, and the support they received from the various institutions they attended. The question of permanent residence was also high on their agenda. Finally, the students talked about their goals, and how their Australian education and experience would contribute to their future expectations (see Appendices 13-17).

Once the formal interviews were completed, I maintained contact with the students in person and by email and by telephone, with our most recent contact in February 2014.

3.4.2 Data gathering, academic language and learning advisers

Interviews were conducted with four academic language and learning (ALL) advisers in the study. While ethnographic interviews are usually unstructured, informal and collaborative, there are situations where a more formal, structured approached is appropriate (O'Reilly, 2012). Although my approach with the ALL advisers was slightly more formal than the tone I took with the students, it was still quite informal, and given we shared similar academic interests, we were able to converse almost as colleagues, with shared understanding.

Data collection occurred in one in-depth semi-structured interview with each ALL adviser which followed a brief discussion of their role and situation, and the broader environment in which they

operated (see Appendices 18-21). Questions were open-ended, described by Hall (2008, p.150) as designed to elicit answers from respondents, expressed in their own words. The interviews varied in length, from forty minutes to a little over an hour. Interviewees were asked a series of questions about their role, and were encouraged to speak at length about challenges they face in delivering programs to students with sub-optimum language levels, whether discipline academics needed to share responsibility for language development, and appropriate language levels for tertiary study. The semi-structured nature of the interview was sufficiently flexible to allow supplementary questions to be asked when interviewees introduced new topics. Interviewees were also given an opportunity, at the conclusion of each interview, to add matters which they felt were relevant or important, but which hadn't been canvassed. All interviewees said the interview had covered the issues which they felt were significant, although two chose to add additional comments to questions they'd already answered.

3.4.3. Data gathering, discipline academics

My objective was to interview business academics at some of the universities where the students had studied, or at universities where I had either interviewed language advisers or had scheduled interviews with senior university administration. To find suitable participants, I initially reviewed the websites of universities in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia and approached academics at the lecturer level. However emails to a number went unanswered and the two who responded gave constrained interviews which did little to expand on the topic. It was not my initial intention to interview senior discipline academics. However a head of school whom I had approached for assistance in finding suitable lecturers agreed to meet with me and gave an interview that was both frank and illuminating (see Appendix 22).

To counter the difficulties in finding willing discipline academics I changed my approach, using personal contacts to locate interviewees experienced in teaching subjects to international

students, locating two who agreed to be interviewed. Both are highly accomplished in their field, have co-authored books and have published widely on their specialist topics.

Although O'Reilly (2012, pp. 132-133) warns that is usually more difficult to get people to go into a subject in depth when they are in company, particularly if one is subordinate, she also says groups can be creative, bouncing ideas off each other and thus raising issues and going off in tangents that the researcher had not even considered. She cites Gilbert (1993) who found a group of people who had shared similar experiences became more frank and open, talking freely about their experiences they would not easily share in another setting. Because the individual interviews with the accounting lecturers had not achieved the interview objective, free and frank discussion of the issues, I decided to try a different discussion format, and asked the discipline academics to agree to a joint interview. To address the question of status influencing their responses, I recruited two business lecturers from different universities. This strategy seemed to work; they expressed their opinions freely, often agreeing with what the other was saying, but also disagreeing from time to time. Data were collected from the business academics in a single interview which lasted almost an hour and a half. The question format was semi-structured; some establishing questions were asked and the interviewees were encouraged to speak freely and to digress from the questions as they saw fit (see Appendix 23).

3.4.4 Data gathering, senior university administrators

Three senior administrators from Australian universities participated in the study. The interviewees were at pro-vice chancellor (international) level, or equivalent. The interviewers were unstructured; one interview took forty minutes, a second one hour and ten minutes. The third interviewee spoke for over two hours, although not all of the interview was recorded. After talking for more than an hour he shared information that was highly confidential, in terms of his university's intergovernmental relations. Because of the sensitivity of the information, and because it wasn't particularly relevant in terms of my study, as a gesture of good faith, I paused

my recorder while this discussion took place. None of this information has been included in this thesis.

I had opted for largely unstructured interviews with the university administrators because as O'Reilly (2012, p.120) says, an unstructured interview is more like a conversation than an interview; it is free-flowing and enables the interviewee to respond in a leisurely way, to disagree, to change the topic, to add new ideas and so on. My conversations with the three university administrators proceeded that way. My interview plan was to start with some routine questions about their individual universities before inviting them to disclose what they perceived as the issues and challenges in international education. Having an interview plan may seem counter to the notion of unstructured interviewing, but as O'Reilly (2012, p.120) points out, an interviewer may start with a plan, but is pleased to allow interviewees to speak freely about other topics.

I had anticipated the interviews with the PVCs would be quite formal, given that O'Reilly (2012, p.125) argues that when a person being interviewed is considered to be of higher status and the interview is being conducted in their status role and not as a private individual, a formal interview is appropriate. Accordingly, I requested an interview through their academic offices, provided documentation regarding my study and presented myself in a much more formal manner than I had for the other interviews. However all three interviewees treated the interview quite informally and conversed in a way that appeared quite relaxed, open and trusting. Indeed all three interviewees gave me information or material which was confidential, advising I could use it as background information, but not include the content in my dissertation (see Appendices 24-26).

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

O'Reilly (2012, pp.179-180) argues that in ethnography the distinction between writing down (data collection) and writing up (analysis and presentation) is somewhat artificial, because ethnographic research analysis is so tangled up with every stage of the research process that it is

difficult to talk of a discrete stage. Ethnographic research uses an inductive approach, with the researcher beginning with as open a mind and as few preconceptions as possible. Although it is now generally accepted that to start with no preconceptions is well-nigh impossible, the best way to proceed is to be open to one's preconceptions, to read the literature, and to proceed in a manner that is informed but open to surprises (O'Reilly, 2012, pp.29-30). This was the approach I took.

By the end of the data collection phase, I had recorded almost forty hours of interviews as well as collecting written materials, all of which required examination. Methods to analyse qualitative data fall broadly into linguistic or sociological traditions, and there are numerous methods in each. Narrative analysis, conversation or discourse analysis, performance analysis and formal linguistic analysis are all methods which apply to the linguistic tradition, which treats text as an object of analysis itself. My objective was more closely aligned to the sociological tradition, which examines texts as a way of explaining the human experience (Tesch, 1990). Within this tradition free-flowing texts such as responses to open-ended interviews can be analysed in two ways; the first uses raw text as input and includes methods such as word counts, semantic network analysis or cognitive mapping. The second reduces text to code, using methods such as grounded theory, classical content analysis or ethnographic decision models (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, pp.769-770). Choosing a methodology to analyse my data was not straightforward; Ryan and Bernard (p.770) argue that each of the analytical methods has advantages and disadvantages, with some suitable for exploring data and others for making comparisons. After a lengthy evaluation of the available methods, the system which I adopted for exploring and comparing the data in this study used two approaches, grounded theory supported by domain analysis.

3.5.1. Grounded theory

Grounded theory is a methodology that seeks to construct theory about issues of importance in peoples' lives (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998, as cited in Mills,

Bonner, & Francis, 2006, p.2). The theory's design is systematic and qualitative and is used to generate a theory that explains at a broad conceptual level a process, an action or an interaction about a substantive topic. Grounded theory *generates* a theory from the data, when existing theories do not address a research problem or are not relevant to the participants in a study (Creswell, 2008, p.432).

In the grounded theory approach, the researcher has no preconceived ideas to prove or disprove. Rather, issues of importance to participants emerge from the stories that they tell about an area of interest that they have in common with the researcher (Mills et al., 2006).

Grounded theory is an iterative process by which the analyst becomes more and more 'grounded' in the data and develops increasingly richer concepts and models of how the phenomenon being studied works (Ryan and Bernard, 2000, pp.782-783). The approach identifies categories and concepts that emerge from text and links these concepts into substantive and formal theories. Ryan and Bernard made the following statement to explain the methodology's appeal.

> 'Grounded theorists want to understand people's experiences in as rigorous and detailed manner as possible. They want to identify categories and concepts that emerge from text and link these concepts into substantive and formal theories' (p. 782).

Grounded theory emerged in the late 1960s. Developed by Glaser and Strauss, it went through a number of developments (what Mills et al., [2006, p. 2] call a 'methodological spiral') before Charmaz (2006) advanced her constructivist approach, rejecting procedures that were too systematic and stressing flexible strategies that emphasize the *meaning* participants ascribe to situations, while acknowledging the roles of both the researcher and those being researched (Creswell, 2008, p.433). The 'methodological spiral' has thrown up three dominant types of grounded theory designs. Used widely in educational research, the *systematic* procedure associated with Strauss and Corbin (1990) is more prescriptive than the original grounded theory developed in the sixties, and emphasizes the use of three phases of coding of data. The

emerging design, advanced by Glaser in 1992, is more flexible and less prescribed than the *systematic* approach and stresses the importance of letting a theory emerge from the data rather than using the specific, pre-set categories that are used in the systematic procedure. The *constructivist* approach proposed by Kathy Charmaz (2006) moves away from the more quantitative *systematic* and *emerging* approaches and emphasises the views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions and ideologies of individuals. The account of the research is written to be more explanatory, more discursive and more probing of the assumptions and meanings for individuals in the study, with the conclusion more questioning of the data than conclusive (Creswell, 2008, pp.438-439). O'Reilly (2012, p.181) argues that while ethnographic analysis is very similar to some grounded theory approaches, it is less prescriptive and is more willing to adopt and adapt existing theories. However the *constructivist* grounded theory approach also eschews prescription and therefore seemed an appropriate methodology to enable me to achieve the intention of this study, to understand the experiences and motivations of Chinese students studying in Australia.

One of the concerns in coding the interviewees' texts is whether the key concepts emerge from the data or whether they are suggested by the researcher in the form of semi-structured questions and guiding of interviews. As a form of confirmation of the key codes and relationships that emerged from the grounded theory analysis, I used a second, complementary method, *Domain Analysis* in my review of the text from the interviews.

3.5.2 Domain Analysis

Drawing on the work of Spradley (1979), *Domain Analysis* is based on the identification of key topics, referred to as domains, which recur in the interviewees' discussions, and the relationship between them. The approach takes a four step approach; first the main issues (or domains) raised by interviewees are identified. In a second step, detailed topics within each domain are grouped. The third stage captures what each interviewee actually says, often presented in direct quotations,

about each domain and topic, while the final step identifies relationships between the primary domains and topics from the statements made by the interviewees (Atkinson & Abu El Haj, 1996, pp.439-440).

3.5.3 Issues with the data analysis

In both research approaches a concern is whether the codes, domains and sub-categories that emerge from the interviewees' data are actually the topics that they deem important and relevant, or whether they reflect the researcher's questions. The answer in this case is probably both. Clearly some themes emerged from the more structured sections of the interview scripts, both for the students and the other groups of interviewees. By the same token, many of these topics had emerged from other data and 'pre-interviews' with the respondents. It can therefore be argued that they were topics the interviewees saw as important. Nevertheless, aware that my questions could direct the themes, I attempted to minimise my influence by asking questions of a broad nature, to enable the interviewees to respond in a way that allowed them to raise more specific matters important to them. Consequently, although to some extent the interviews are guided in terms of the general topics, there is a lot of room for interviewees to direct their answers to matters they feel are significant and relevant.

Another issue with ethnographic research is its iterative nature. Although often seen as strength (O'Reilly, 2012), in this case it may have influenced subsequent interviews in that, as themes started to emerge from one group they were introduced into the next round of interviews and discussions with other participants, in the form of semi-structured questions and some prompts. In this sense, the themes were dictated to a degree by those who had gone before. I attempted to address this issue by looking at how each topic or theme was introduced; whether it flowed from the interviewee's unstructured discussions or from my questions or prompts.

At the same time, I remained conscious that this is a story of the students' experiences and it is the themes they identified that have remained paramount. Coding the data by using two methods, grounded theory and domain analysis, was also an attempt to confirm the validity of the themes, to overcome these inevitable consequences of this type of methodology.

3.6 ANALYSIS

3.6.1 Grounded theory

Each of the sets of data was analysed similarly. With the students, I read through the transcripts of each recorded interview a number of times, making notes of any common issues. I then re-listened to the interview recordings to identify any specific emphases which could have influenced meaning or importance. Using examples from the text, in a process Ryan and Bernard (2000, p.783) call 'open coding' I identified a number of possible themes. I then re-read emails from the students and notes of conversations with them to see if any additional themes emerged and to find examples which matched the issues identified from the transcripts. I adopted a similar approach with the transcripts of the interviews with the other three groups. This allowed me to compare and contrast the themes and concepts among the groups and also within the groups to find common ground or points of difference. The process was iterative, in that I analysed and coded each piece of data as it was collected, making notes (or memo writing, as Charmaz [2000] describes it) to link categories and themes and to identify gaps that could require further data collection. Charmaz describes this process, of going back into the field to redress gaps in the data, as theoretical sampling.

3.6.2 Domain Analysis

I used a similar analytical approach using domain analysis. First, 'clean' copies of the interview transcripts were reviewed to identify the key topics (the domains). Then more detailed topics within the broad themes were identified and grouped before finally extracting specific quotes

from the transcripts of the interviewees' interviews to show the relationship between the domains and the topics.

The two methods delivered quite a consistent set of themes and issues, which to a large degree reinforced those that emerged from the Literature Review. Each theme and issue is discussed in the body chapters.

CHAPTER 4: THE LONG MARCH OF CHINESE STUDENTS

THE STUDENTS' STORIES

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The long march by the students in this study has taken them almost 20 years and for some, continues. After struggling for more than a decade in the highly-controlled Chinese education system, they came to Australia to complete their education, but found their language skills were inadequate, they made few Australian friends, and changing migration rules threatened their dream of permanent residence. For some, the journey has now come to an end. They have secured their degrees and the permanent residence that was so important to them, and are building careers here in Australia. For others, the long march continues. Forced to return to China because they couldn't meet immigration standards, they are actively exploring options to return to Australia.

4.1.1 Purpose and themes

In this chapter the students recount experiences of their Australian education, including how as teenagers they coped with moving to a foreign country to study in a second language. They discuss their motivations and expectations, whether they achieved their objectives and whether they felt it worthwhile. The chapter also explores the influence of their Chinese education on their Australian experience, the challenges they encountered, whether they felt their language was adequate for their studies, and the assistance their universities provided. The themes that emerged both in informal communication from 2005 when I first met them to discussions in February, 2014, and the more formal interviews conducted annually from 2007 to 2011, have provided the title for my thesis and have helped me formulate the research questions. These themes will be explored in more detail in this chapter, including a brief discussion of each.

1) Students' motivations, expectations and outcomes.
2) Their Chinese and Australian education experience.
3) Teaching, learning and student support.
4) Observations of other Chinese students.
5) Living, working and participating in Australian society.
6) Student participation and integration.

4.1.2 The students

The five students in the study, now in their late-twenties, came to Australia from China around seven years ago with shared objectives of earning tertiary qualifications and becoming permanent Australian citizens. Only two had known each other before enrolling in 2005 in a pre-university program in Langfang in north-eastern China. Despite coming from largely different regions and backgrounds, all shared a number of common characteristics and experiences that drew them towards a foreign education.

All were born, and all but one educated to high school leaving standard, in China. All expressed frustration at aspects of their Chinese education; one consistent criticism was that their learning was highly controlled and teacher directed, and all wanted a more rewarding learning experience. Four of the five had failed to secure entry into the highly competitive Chinese tertiary system; the one who had qualified rejected a Chinese university place because she was dissatisfied with her previous education experience. Instead, they all enrolled in the Queensland Government foundation program *Unilearn*, delivered by a local company, Aoji Enrolment Centre of International Education Co. Ltd. (Aoji). A company subsidiary, the Beijing Commonwealth English College, partnered with Education Queensland International [EQI], the Queensland Government's international education division, to deliver the program (Aoji, n.d.). All aged around seventeen when they enrolled, the students completed their year-long studies and started making their way to Australia in late 2006, settling on Queensland's Gold Coast and in Sydney in New South Wales.

All believed an Australian university degree would provide a conduit to permanent residence (PR) in Australia.

4.1.3 Students' language

As much as possible, to maintain the authenticity of their voices, the students tell their stories in their own words, using direct quotes, written in italics, taken from the transcripts of their interviews. For the most part, to enable readers to 'hear' the students tell their stories, no attempt has been made to 'correct' their English. However on occasion it has been necessary to insert clarification to aid meaning, and this is done in brackets, in un-italicised script. For example, two of the students in particular use 'come' and 'go' interchangeably and this has been corrected where incorrect use interferes with meaning. Sometimes when listening to the students' interviews their meaning hasn't been absolutely clear and to ensure that the explanation inserted in the text conveys their intent precisely, I sought clarification from them. In the interests of brevity and clarity, rather than include full responses within the body of this paper sections have been omitted, and this is indicated by three dots, preceded and followed by a space, within a quotation. (This method has also been used to report dialogue in Chapters 5 to 7). My discussions with the students have not been reported in chronological order, except where it seemed important to mention the time frame (for example, where an opinion held in one interview later changed).

4.1.4 Unilearn Foundation Program and university eligibility

The Unilearn Foundation Program (UFP), owned by the Queensland Government and delivered offshore in partnership with local education institutions, is a pathway program designed to prepare international students for overseas study. On graduation from its three levels students are issued with certificates registered under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and become eligible to apply to various Australian universities for entry to bachelor degree courses.

In 2006, when the students in the study completed their program, 27 Australian universities accepted Unilearn graduates (Department of Education, Queensland, 2008).

Each of the Unilearn Foundation Program's three levels (Certificate II, Certificate III and Certificate IV) takes 12 weeks of tuition, with students studying four subjects; Language Communication (English), Mathematics, Business, and Information Communication Technology. Each level has 240 hours of classroom teaching with 120 hours of independent study recommended. The language of instruction is exclusively English and the course is taught almost always by native English speakers. Students with an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of 4.5 can enter directly into Certificate II. Students who cannot demonstrate this language level first need to take a 12 week intensive English 'pre-course' at Aoji. A student who starts in the 'pre-course' will need a minimum of 48 weeks to complete the full program. EQI claims that students who commence Certificate II with an IELTS score of 4.5 should reach an IELTS 5.5 to 6.5 by the time they complete their course (EQI, 2012). Although EQI's website does not specifically say so, students who scored an IELTS 5.5 or equivalent were deemed to have passed Unilearn's English language requirement, although a minimum IELTS score of 6 or 6.5 is an entry prerequisite for most Australian universities' undergraduate courses.

None of the students had taken an IELTS test when they enrolled in the foundation program in July 2005 so they started in the language 'pre-course', studying English for 20 hours a week for 12 weeks. All the students completed IELTS tests before leaving for Australia; four scored IELTS 5.5 and one, Daisy, an IELTS 6.0. All were offered undergraduate enrolment at Australian universities, provisional on their first completing additional language studies. All completed pathway language courses at institutions associated with the universities that had offered them enrolment. None was required to complete further IELTS testing before they started their degrees.

4.1.5 Permanent residence

All of the students expected to be eligible for migration under the provisions in force when they first came to Australia. This was not an unreasonable expectation, given that by 2007-2008, almost half of the skilled migrants who received permanent residence (PR) visas under General Skilled Migration (GSM) categories were former overseas students (Birrell & Perry, 2009, p. 66). However migration policy changes in 2005 and 2009 made it more difficult for international students to gain permanent residence (Birrell & Perry, 2009). Further migration policy changes in 2011 (as some of the students in this study were getting ready to apply for PR) and again in 2012 made it even more difficult.

Migration policy is based on a points system. Until early 2005 prospective migrants needed to accrue 110 points to be eligible for permanent residence. However in April 2005, a review increased the number of points required to 120, making PR more difficult. Points were awarded for *Occupation, Age, Language*, *Australian education* and *Work experience*. Being aged between 18 and 29 gave applicants 30 points, they scored 15 points for achieving an IELTS minimum 6.0 overall and a further 15 points for completing both a bachelor and a master's degree. If an applicant's occupation was deemed by the Immigration Department to be in short supply, they scored additional migration points (Birrell & Perry, 2009). A student's study choice therefore became a critical factor in reaching the higher barrier. *Accountancy* was one of the preferred occupations which attracted 60 migration points, and it is no coincidence that four of the five students chose this degree. The fifth studied Finance, another occupation in demand. As Birrell and Perry (2009) pointed out, prospective students were quick to appreciate the key to achieving the 120 point PR outcome was to get a qualification that would lead to a preferred occupation. Three of the students completed their studies in time to apply for PR under these provisions and two were granted permanent residence. Both revealed they had studied Accountancy and completed master's degrees specifically to increase their migration points. The third student

applied after completing a bachelor degree and a diploma but at the time of her last interview (November 2010) she had not been notified of the outcome. She has since gained PR by marrying a permanent Australian resident. Two other students were not able to apply before the policy changes in July 2011. One failed to meet the language threshold and the other was unable to amass sufficient migration points. Both returned to China, although are hopeful they will be able to return to Australia in the future.

Migration policy amendments introduced on 1 July 2011 were designed to help select the 'best and brightest skilled migrants to make the optimum economic contribution to Australia' (DIAC, 2010, paragraph 3). Although the new policy reduced the number of points required to meet the base level for permanent migration from 120 to 65, it narrowed or tightened the categories for which these points could be scored. Changes included:

- Removal of occupation-related points (although applicants still needed to nominate an occupation on the Skilled Occupation List [SOL] and have their skills assessed).
- Lifting the language barrier so that applicants no longer scored migration points for meeting the threshold (IELTS 6.0). Additional points accrued only with an IELTS 7.0 (or better) on all bands.
- Narrowing the age band in which applicants scored maximum points.
- Removing the awarding of additional points for master's degrees. Applicants still earned points for undergraduate degrees but only scored additional points for doctoral degrees (DIAC, 2010).

Migration points were awarded for *Age* (applicants scored the maximum 30 points if they were aged 25 to 32), *Language* (10 points for an IELTS 7.0, or 20 points for an IELTS 8.0), *Education* (15 points for a bachelor's degree and 20 for a PhD) and *Australian study* (5 points for a minimum of two years' study in Australia). Even with an IELTS 7.0 the students would still have fallen 5 points short of the target. Instead, they would have had to demonstrate work experience, be nominated by a relative or government, or complete a professional year or a language accreditation to reach the required 65 points (DIAC, 2010).

Further major reforms to Australia's skilled migration program came into force on 1 July 2012 (although a transition period enabled potential migrants to apply for points-tested skilled migration visas until 1 January 2013). Although the points remained the same, there was a significant change in how prospective migrants apply for permanent residence. These reforms effectively removed the right to apply directly for a visa, replacing it with a system that requires applicants to submit an Expression of Interest through an online service, *SkillSelect,* which ranks their skills and attributes against a points test. At the discretion of the government, intending migrants may then be invited to apply for a visa (DIAC, 2012).

4.2. THE STUDENTS

This section précises the students' experiences from the time they arrived, and includes a comment from each, relevant to their experience.

4.2.1 CRYSTAL

Born on 6 November 1987 in Zheng He in the Chinese Province of Fujian, Crystal came to Australia from China in March 2007 with the joint objectives of earning a Bachelor of Accounting degree and gaining permanent residence. By late 2011 she had exceeded her education objective, earning both an undergraduate degree and a Master's Degree in Finance. However she failed in her second goal, gaining permanent residence. Despite living, working and studying in Australia for four and a half years, Crystal's final IELTS test showed although she had progressed half a band point to IELTS 6.0 overall, her *Speaking* score had regressed from IELTS 6.0 to IELTS 5.5. Ineligible to apply for PR because she couldn't meet the language barrier, Crystal returned to China in September 2011, disappointed but looking to the future.

> *It's like half sad, half happy*. … *It's feel, finish one period, finish one road, I've finished this adventure and I'm going to just start another adventure in the future, for the future, in my*

whole life. Just feel something … fulfilment, that's the word, achievement, and finally I got one paper to say, 'hey Crystal you have a master degree. Now you have finished and now you are adult, like, ready to step into a career'.

4.2.2 ALICE

Alice was born in Fujian Province on 29 October, 1987 and came to Australia in early 2007, enrolling in an Accountancy degree which she expected would lead to permanent residence. However Alice withdrew from Macquarie University before starting her studies, alarmed by the large number of international students on campus. Instead, she completed a two-year Diploma in Hospitality Management at another institute, before returning to her study of Accountancy, completing a bachelor's degree at yet another institution. By the time she had completed her undergraduate degree, the eligibility criteria for permanent residence had changed. At the time of her last formal interview in November 2010 she was studying for a Master's Degree in Finance and was waiting to turn 25, to boost her age-based migration points. In her final semester of study Alice's focus turned to her language, trying to achieve an overall IELTS 7.0 (with 7.0 in all four skills) to achieve more migration points. Although she scored an IELTS 7.0 in March 2012, her writing score was only IELTS 6.0, which meant she met the language threshold, but could not gain migration points for language. Unable to reach the 65 points she needed for PR, Alice returned to China in late 2012, frustrated at the changing migration policy.

*It's not fair. Like, I think (*the government*) was putting the migration as a trick. As a trick for the students to come. To push the economic up. Because I know the Australian Government earn a lot from the oversea students from like daily expenses, and also especially the tuitions, that's a huge amount for them. Yeah. But now, they change the migration's rules.*

4.2.3 PENNY

Penny was born in Shandong Province on 14 February 1987 and came to Australia in April 2007. She took a pathway program into her undergraduate degree, graduating in July 2010 with a Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting. Mindful that when Australia's migration policy changed on 1 July 2011 she almost certainly would not qualify for permanent residence, she maximised her PR chances under the old policy by completing a master's degree to gain extra points. She then focused on achieving the language goal, taking two more IELTS tests before finally scoring an overall IELTS 6.0 with 6.0 in each band. The points she scored for her language level, together with the points she gained for her two degrees, made her eligible to apply to live permanently in Australia under the policy current then. She lodged her application for PR on 24 June 2011 and was advised less than four months later that she had been successful. Despite achieving her goal, she too was critical of the changing migration laws.

> *The (*immigration*) policy is always changed in Australia.* So *I think most students, they think it is unfair. It is unfair for overseas students. I think when students come to Australia, the major reason is can get the PR. But currently they cannot. Currently the trading is other places, America and Canada. Because Canada has opened the PR policy.*

4.2.4 JAMES

Born in the south of China on 31 December 1987, James came to Australia in late 2006 with the joint objectives of completing an Accounting degree and obtaining permanent residence, and has achieved both goals. He completed his undergraduate degree and a Master's Degree in Finance at a time when the combined degrees still earned migration points. He successfully applied for permanent residence before the migration policy changed on 1 July 2011. Despite his

qualifications, he was unable to find work in his chosen profession (Accounting) and finally after three years of unsuccessfully applying for jobs, set up his own business.

> *(*My Australian education*) actually did help me to learn what is real business looks like and really practise my accounting skill ... I got a couple of friends who study at a Chinese university and the teaching course is still is basically like we did in high school, like, give you general theories and you don't really have a chance to practise them … so it's a big gap between university education and the real working life (*in China*).*

4.2.5 DAISY

Daisy was born in Baotou in Inner Mongolia on 5 May 1986. The only student to score an IELTS 6.0 before coming to Australia, she arrived in late 2006 and completed her undergraduate degree in June 2009. To improve her job prospects she enrolled in an online Diploma of Financial Planning which qualified her to provide financial planning advice. With her academic qualifications but no experience, Daisy found it difficult to find a job in Australia, so investigated buying a business, finally settling on a franchised coffee shop in the Sydney suburb of Rhodes. Permanent residence was always a goal and she applied for PR in June 2010, after securing an IELTS score of 7.0 (with Writing 6.5). At the time of her last interview (November 2010) she had still not been notified if she'd been successful. However Daisy has never been concerned about the delay in processing her application, because her Chinese husband has PR which extends to her as his wife. Without needing a master's degree for migration points, she didn't see the point of continuing studying.

> *It was really difficult to find a job and I don't want just to stay here or just go for another degree … Most of my friends ask me 'why don't you just go on studying?', but for what? If you can't get a good job for (*with a*) bachelor degree, why do you expect you can get a good job after you finish your master degree?*

4.3 COMING TO AUSTRALIA; MOTIVATIONS, EXPECTATIONS AND OUTCOMES

All five students had similar reasons for coming to Australia; education and permanent residence. All felt their Chinese education was overly competitive and teacher-directed and did not let them achieve their full potential. All chose Australia because their parents felt it was a good destination for Chinese students.

4.3.1 CRYSTAL

In the first of her three interviews, Crystal gave two reasons for coming to Australia to study. Her primary motivation was to gain permanent residence and she acknowledged that she had enrolled in Accountancy to gain migration points. Her second reason, also given in her first interview, was to satisfy her family's aspirations for her. Her father wanted her to become an accountant, as he had been in his early career.

> *My parents, they want me to have a career which is a skilled one. That means even if I left, even I leave this industry for (*a*) while, once I want to come back I can still start my career immediately. … They want me to have a skilled job, skilled like Accounting. … They want me to study in a professional accounting company. … I think they want me to work around three years and get my CPA (*certified practising accountant*) and get three years working experience to finish my exams. That's their plan for the first three years.*

Despite her parents' wishes, Crystal opted out of her Bachelor of Accounting at Macquarie University to enrol with her friend Alice in a Diploma of Hospitality Management at the International College of Management Sydney (ICMS), a 'strategic partner' with Macquarie University (ICMS, n.d.). Although she completed the two-semester academic component of the diploma, she failed to complete the required industry placement. Deciding instead that her original goal, *Accountancy*, was a better career option, she enrolled in a Bachelor of Professional

Accounting at the Holmes Institute, a private institute in Sydney which provides Higher Education, along with Secondary, ELICOS and Vocational Education and Training (Holmes Institute, 2011). As she completed her undergraduate studies, Crystal maintained her objective of wanting to live in Australia permanently and enrolled in a Master's Degree in Commerce which she completed in mid-2011 at the University of New South Wales. As she neared graduation, and conscious of impending changes to migration policy on 1 July 2011, Crystal prepared to lodge her PR application. First however she needed to demonstrate she met the threshold language level, minimum IELTS 6.0 in all four skills. Confident her language exceeded this level, Crystal sat an IELTS test, scoring an overall IELTS 6.0. However her *Speaking* score fell short of the minimum requirement. Although she had scored IELTS 6.0 for *Speaking* twice before she left China, in this critical test Crystal only scored IELTS 5.5. Because she had not satisfied the threshold English language proficiency level, Crystal felt she had no option but to leave Australia.

> *I feel a little bit sad because I have to leave because I love Sydney so much and I ... I will miss Australia for ever, I will miss the place I lived, also the friends who accompanied me these years. This is the place I grew up (*matured*), this is the place that told me a lot of things here. I really like Sydney, I really like Australia, but Australian doesn't accept me to be a resident here.*

4.3.2 ALICE

Alice also came to Australia to study Accountancy, and her parents were also instrumental in her decision to study abroad.

> *It was the influence of my family. Like, my mother and father, they wanted me to be a professional. … Accounting sounds like it's professional and skilful and you can get a good career. … Like, if my parents, my family, recommend it, it's going to be good for me.*

Under government policy at that time, *Accounting* was on the 'preferred occupation' list (Birrell & Healy, 2008) which gave accounting students additional credit towards permanent residence. Alice acknowledged that this was a consideration.

> *Yeah, that's another consideration … was a part of consideration to take to my parents.*

After struggling with relentless pressure in high school, Alice said she jumped at the chance when her parents asked if she wanted to study abroad.

> *I can't really feel (*cope with*) the Chinese style education. When (*at*) that time, I think I was in year three of high school, I got a really pressures. Like every day I am upset with my study. … So I start to talk to … my parents, and say like, 'I want to try some, something else'. … And my parents counselled me, 'do you want to try overseas?' Like this is the first time I thinking about that. I said, 'of course I want to try and I want to go out to have a look at the other part of the world. That's it exactly'.*

Alice opted for Australia over other Western countries because her parents felt she would be less likely to face discrimination.

> *I choose Australia … because first of all my parents considering the society in here, is like Australia is much more multi-culture society ... the discrimination … they consider very lower than the others (*countries*). Actually that is for the* (discrimination) *experience, Australians are better than others.*

Enrolled to study Accounting at Macquarie University, she had a change of heart when she saw the number of international students on campus.

> *I don't really like the environment in Macquarie University. ... I want to feel I'm oversea, I'm speaking English, I want to be in that way, but actually in Macquarie I can't feel that way. It's like there are too many Asian students. ... I just don't like that environment.*

Instead she enrolled in a Diploma of Hospitality Management at the International College of Management which she finished in two years. She then returned to her first career objective, Accountancy, enrolling in a Bachelor of Professional Accounting at the Holmes Institute, gaining credit for seven subjects from her Hospitality studies. Achieving a Grade Point Average (GPA) at distinction level, she accepted an offer to study for a Master of Financial Analysis at the University of New South Wales, starting in February 2011.

Unable to accrue sufficient points to apply before the policy changed on 1st July 2011, Alice decided to wait until she finished her postgraduate degree and to turn 25.

> *The immigrations points is always changed and for my age is not reached, is not enough for the highest points yet. Next year I should be okay for that. After my birthday, because you require 25 years old (*to*) get like 30 points.*

Her language was another obstacle. Alice had passed the migration language threshold, but had not scored IELTS 7.0 in all skills so was not eligible for additional migration points. Her education completed but unable to qualify for permanent residence, she returned to China.

Alice was critical of changes to immigration policy and questioned both the rationale for the changes and the motives of the government in introducing them.

> *For my feelings, is like … it's ... I just feel governments doesn't like so many overseas staying in **their** (*emphasised*) place. That's one of my first feeling about that. That's why they start to change the migration laws to send these guys study here back to they place after they graduation (*send international students home*). That's what I afraid as an overseas student here. And the other thing I think is keep, to keep to increase the requirements for us, and those requirements not really consistent with the ability you working here or the like socialisation, it's kinda not like a fair assessment.*

4.3.3 PENNY

Penny came to Australia for reasons similar to those of the other students; her high school education was stressful and her results did not enable her to secure a place at a Chinese university. She also wanted different life experiences from those she had had in China. Her decision was influenced by her parents who discouraged her from going to America because of the USA's involvement in military conflicts.

> (Australia is) m*ore peaceful. If I go to American I think I my parents said, 'This the life is not very peaceful. Some war … Most equality in Australia.'*

In her first interview Penny said she wanted to apply for permanent residence in Australia, although she was not confident she could achieve an IELTS 6.0. (At this time she had already started undergraduate studies at Macquarie University, which required an entry level of IELTS 6.5). Gaining PR became a stronger imperative during her undergraduate degree, prompted perhaps by a developing awareness of immigration policy. To help support herself she worked part-time for a Chinese education agency where she became aware that changes were imminent.

> *The major difference is point. Do you know the point policy? It's changed. Before the 1 of July in 2011 the total point is 120 and you can use the master degree to get more 10 points (*ten points more*) if you get bachelor degree in Australia. Now is cannot to use the master degree to get another ten points. This is cancelled.*

To improve her chances of obtaining PR before the policy change, Penny enrolled in a Master of Business Degree at the University of New England.

> *This master, just for the purpose of this master is PR. Ten more points. So I don't learn any knowledge in this. I just pass the exam.*

Equipped with undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, Penny took the next step of securing the required IELTS 6.0, sitting tests first in April and then in June 2011. After learning she had scored the coveted IELTS 6.0, Penny submitted her application for permanent residence, less than a week before the policy changed.

> *So when I finished my, ah, the master degree, I need to take the IELTS test. … I put my application on 24 June and get PR on … 17 October.*

Penny was granted permanent residence, accruing the necessary 120 points because her occupation was in demand (60 points), she met the age criteria (30 points) and the language threshold (15 points) and had undergraduate and master's degrees (15 points).

4.3.4 JAMES

James arrived in Australia with two primary aims; to qualify as an accountant and to gain permanent residence. In the first of three interviews, James said his objective, despite wanting PR, was not to stay in Australia indefinitely but to gain study and work experience before establishing a career in China.

> *Well, from what I plan at the moment I was thinking about living in Australia for another five years and doing my CPA (*Certified Practising Accountant qualification*) and then probably go back to China. … I don't think I can probably fit in to the* (Australian) *society now. I am still struggling with my language so I didn't really think I can really build a good career if I stay in Australia. If I come (*go*) back to China after I got my professional recognition ... my English skills will be an advantage for me but if I stay here it's probably going to be a disadvantage.*

Eighteen months later, James was still planning to return to China although he felt he would spend longer in Australia than he'd first planned.

I haven't really decided that yet but I think , ah, I don't really think I got much opportunity to work at the top level in Australia so I think I will probably finish my CPA go back to China … another 10 years. See how it goes. I think it (staying in Australia*) would be a little bit too hard for me.*

By his third interview, as James gained confidence, his attitude to building a future in Australia had changed.

Y*eah, I'm doing a sales job, so I have to deal with people a lot, so I am quite confident about my language. I think I still have lots of opportunity to improve, but I think I can. … I am not shy any more. I am confident to talk to people, and I think to build up a career here is a challenge for me, so I* (will be) *really fulfilled if I complete the goal. So I would welcome the challenge*.

James came to Australia to study because he had not gained a place in a Chinese university and he wanted to study in a different environment, describing the Chinese education system as 'not a good fit'.

*Well, firstly I think the (*Australian*) culture was a little different because the education … was different from China. It just feels like it (*Chinese education*) is not really a good fit for me and there's actually no uni accepts me at that time. So it just gives me an option or second chance to study abroad*.

The choice of Australia as a study destination was taken mutually by James and his parents.

*Money was always an issue and study in Australia was a little bit cheaper than other place, and actually like the weather and the place was really nice … Finance plays a big deal in (*how*) the decision was made. You know it costs me around 600 grand of Chinese dollars*

*(*around $A100,000*) to study in Australia but it costs me twice as much if I want to study in England or the United States.*

James said that he chose Accounting to maximise his chances to get permanent residence.

I was thinking about staying in Australia so I have to check their immigration requirements. So I decided because Accounting was listed under the critical skill I got extra points.

James completed his undergraduate degree, a Bachelor of Finance with a major in Accounting and a minor in Economics, before completing a Master of Finance degree. He explained that he had enrolled in the master's degree primarily to gain migration points.

The Master of Finance thing was really mainly for the PR reasons.

James was granted PR under the regulations that existed prior to 1 July 2011. He had already exceeded the immigration language threshold of IELTS 6.0 in a test he took in his final semester of his master's degree in which he scored 7.5 overall, but with an IELTS 6.5 in *Writing*. Like Penny, he met the immigration threshold of 120 points by scoring 60 points for studying an occupation in demand, 30 points because of his age, 15 for having scored IELTS 6.0 or more, and a further 15 points for having completed both undergraduate and master's degrees.

4.3.5 DAISY

Daisy also came to Australia looking for a different education experience. She had rejected a place at a Chinese university, constrained by the style of teaching.

*I find I don't like the (*Chinese*) education, that's why I come to Australia. … Because I don't like study like a machine and follow others. I want to be creative and communication … Because if you don't communicate with others, if you don't discuss, what*

*(*more*) can you learn more about the question, how can you know more about the fact? You know, it's how it works in China.*

Despite first choosing Canada as her study destination, Daisy finally decided on Australia because of a perception, shared by others in the study, that Australia was less discriminatory than other Western countries. Like the other students, her parents played a key role in helping her reach a decision.

*Actually I decide first I choose from (*in choosing between*) Canada and Australia I decide to go to there (*Canada*) to study and my parents, they asked their friends and they told them Australia is better because for bachelor degree you only need three years and the people are nice. … My parents worried (*about*) me because they know some countries they have some hot* (strong*), to say, discrimination, and Chinese people and my parents went (*had been*) to Australia … and they thought Australian people are nice … They thought I could have a better life in Australia because people are equal and you know if you go to a country and the people don't respect you, you will feel bad. But for Australia I felt lot of people are nice and they are really happy to help you when you are in trouble. That's good, yeah, and they don't have too much discrimination (*struggles with word*) and the ethic normally equal (*egalitarian*).*

Because Daisy had not achieved the IELTS 6.5 she needed to study for a Bachelor of Applied Finance at Macquarie University, she enrolled in three months of English study at Macquarie English Language Centre before starting her Bachelor degree in February 2007.

It's a three year study and because I do a summer course ... make it faster.

After graduating she took an online course so she could qualify to give financial advice.

> *People who's working in finance department, they can make a lot of money (*giggling*) … But now I realise if you do financial planner you can help people organise their money, it's really good. … I may be starting my own business in the future … the knowledge is also helpful and I can do some investment by myself.*

Daisy said she completed the financial planning qualification to help her start her career after finding, to her surprise, that she couldn't find a job after she graduated.

> *After I finished my degree I have a long holiday and I go back to China and I just have a rest. Then when I went (*came*) back I tried to find a job and it was really hard. Maybe the language was a problem … I am not PR or citizen and for bank or financial institutions they prefer to provide the opportunity to the local.*

She was also surprised to find that without work experience, her degree hadn't equipped her to find a job.

> *The bachelor's degree has nothing to do with the job. It's totally different and that shocked me at first because in China you know if you got a degree from a good university it's easy to get a good job. But in Australia every time they just ask whether you have experience.*

She was further surprised to find that the online Diploma in Financial Planning seemed to carry more weight with potential employers than her degree.

> *It's only diploma degree and it's easy to get it. It only takes two months but they thought this is even more important than the degree, so first I felt shocked.*

After finishing her studies Daisy continued her search for a job while at the same time researching business opportunities, before finally leasing a coffee franchise in Western Sydney.

> *It really really hard find a job. Because in Australia the experience is very important. But for me, I don't get much experience in finance and especially after 2008 (*the global financial crisis*) a lot of positions was cut down so there's little chance for me to find a good job, so I decided to try to build up my own business. And it's taken me about six months or seven months to purchase before I start this business. First we look around a lot of business and looking to see the, you know, profit and the loss statements and also organise everything.*

From the beginning, permanent residence was a goal for Daisy, although unlike other students in the study, it hasn't caused her anxiety.

> *It doesn't matter* (if my application isn't granted) *because I will get married next year and he's PR so after we married if I got problem here I can still stay here or apply for PR for partner. So doesn't matter. I don't care.*

She sat a second IELTS test in Australia after finishing her studies, scoring an overall 7.0 which included a 7.5 for *Speaking* (although her *Writing* score was only 6.5) and then applied for PR. However 18 months later (at the time of her third interview in late 2010), she had still not been advised if her application had been successful.

> *My agent told me, it's like because Australia they limit the new immigration so they just delay it two or three years, so just waiting for that*.

In the meantime, she obtained a bridging visa which allowed her to work, and married her Chinese fiancé whose permanent residence status allows Daisy to remain in Australia as his wife.

DISCUSSION

Three major themes emerged strongly from this section; their families' influence in encouraging the students first to study abroad and then in choosing a destination, the students' disenchantment with their Chinese education, and their quest to secure permanent residence.

The decision to go abroad for education is frequently a family decision in China (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002), and this is revealed in this study. The parents of all the participants encouraged them to go overseas for their degrees, and to choose Australia as their study destination. For Alice, parental guidance was even more influential; she hadn't considered studying abroad until her parents suggested it. In Chinese culture, the family also plays an integral role in the process of career decision making (Bodycott, 2009) and this was evident particularly with Alice and Crystal, whose parents encouraged them to study Accounting, which they saw as a good career. Crystal's parents in particular were highly engaged in her career choices, mapping out her options for a further three years post-graduation. Both students ultimately gained Accounting degrees, although they first studied Hospitality, for a year in Crystal's case, and two in Alice's. Whether they returned to their Accountancy studies to satisfy their parents, or to help secure PR, is not clear. Had Alice and Crystal not changed study streams, they may have been able to secure PR under the conditions that applied before 1 July 2011. Crystal in particular expressed regret that she had vacillated with her study choice and felt had she not done so, she would have finished both a bachelor and master's degree in time to focus on building her language, before the PR rules changed.

A *push* factor that encourages overseas students to study abroad is a perception that overseas courses are better than local ones (Mazzarol, 2001) and this came through in James's and Daisy's interviews in particular, with both identifying that a different education culture existed in Australia. All five students criticized their Chinese education and this was similar to Bodycott's

findings in his research with mainland Chinese parents and students, who labelled the Chinese education system as 'too rigid', the teaching approaches and learning style too 'traditional' and lacking a 'student focus'(2009, p.359). Another *push* factor was the inability of students to gain access to local courses (Mazzarol, 2001) and this too was the students' experience. Four of the five failed to gain entry to Chinese education, similar to the 85% of the Chinese students in Yang's (2007) study who had not gained admission to the university of their choice in China. A desire to gain a better understanding of the West was another *push* factor Mazzarol identified; although the students in this study didn't refer to the West specifically, it could well be implied from their comments. Alice wanted to 'look at another part of the world', while Penny, James and Daisy wanted a different environment and different life experiences.

The possibility of permanent migration was identified as both a *push* factor encouraging students to study overseas, and a *pull* factor in helping to decide their host country (see Mazzarol, 2001; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Yang, 2007; Bodycott, 2009) and the topic recurred throughout the student interviews. Four if not five chose their degrees because it increased the possibility of PR. Two undertook master's degrees explicitly for the purpose of maximising their migration points. Alice, who failed to secure PR, was bitter in her criticism of Australia's changing rules as was Penny who, from her experience as a migration agent, saw other countries benefitting from the uncertainty that numerous migration changes created. The importance of PR is demonstrated in the findings of an AEI survey of international students in Australia. Some 60% of final year *Higher Education* (HE) respondents (AEI, 2007, p.20) and 52% of final year high school respondents (p.15) planned to apply for permanent residency, demonstrating, according to the study, that one of the aims of international students is to stay permanently in Australia (p.20). When asked to list the *pull* factors that HE respondents said brought them to Australia, they prioritised the quality of

education, improvement in job opportunities, and lower costs compared with other Western countries. *Wanting to migrate to Australia* ranked ninth from 12 listed options (AEI, 2007, p. 9).

These findings seem inconsistent; on one hand nearly two-thirds of the HE students and half of the high school students in this study said they wanted to live here permanently. Yet permanent residence was not listed as a key factor bringing them to Australia, either in this, or in later AEI student surveys in 2010 and 2012. In the 2010 survey, *Opportunity for long-term employment or permanent residence* ranked 17th out of 21 listed options, and in the 2012 survey, 21st from 28 options (personal email from J. Havelock, Australian Government Department of Education, 31 January 2014). Unless respondents' decision to seek PR was taken after living in Australia for a period, their rankings of pull factors could be interpreted as a reluctance to acknowledge a key motivation for coming to Australia.

4.4 Academic background, China

4.4.1 Education

The first nine years of schooling are mandatory in China. After six years at primary level, students complete three years in junior secondary school (also called junior middle school), after which they may complete an optional three years of high school studies, either in an academic program or at a vocational education school. Students who follow the academic route enter senior secondary schools (also called senior middle school) and towards the end of the final year, sit the *Gao Kao*, the National Higher Education Entrance Examination, a test to select students for tertiary places (China Education & Research Network, n.d.). Despite significant developments in the standard and availability of education in China, university places are highly coveted and contested

and it is common for students to spend the last year of their three year senior middle school education being rehearsed and prepared for the Gao Kao.

The experience of the students in this study followed this pattern. Most attended kindergarten before being enrolled in six years of primary school. Their secondary education started in junior middle school and after they finished three years later, most completed an additional three years at senior middle school, preparing for the Gao Kao in the final year. Crystal was the exception; she chose not to finish the final year of her senior middle schooling, enrolling instead in the Unilearn Foundation Program described earlier in this chapter.

4.4.2 IELTS RESULTS

The students started their pre-course language studies in China in July 2005 and graduated from Unilearn in July 2006, taking IELTS tests at various points in their year-long study.

Crystal took her first IELTS test after completing Certificate II, scoring IELTS 5.0 overall and IELTS 6.0 in Speaking. She took her second test six months later, increasing her score to IELTS 5.5 overall and maintaining her speaking score of IELTS 6.0.

Alice scored an overall IELTS 5.5, with a score of 6.0 in *Speaking*, when she completed her first IELTS test in Certificate III.

Penny scored an overall IELTS 5.0 in the final term of Unilearn, although she subsequently passed its language component (notionally equivalent to an IELTS 5.5). After graduation in July 2006 she continued her study of English in China and took another language test in early 2007, achieving an IELTS 5.5.

After starting to learn English in his first year of junior middle school, James took his first IELTS exam six years later at the start of his pre-course, scoring IELTS 4.5. He took two more language tests in China before scoring IELTS 5.5 nearly 12 months later.

Daisy's study of English had started when she was in primary school, and continued as part of her secondary education. In her first IELTS test in Term II of the foundation program she scored IELTS 6.0 in all four skills.

After a year of intensive language study, the students made considerable progress. However none had been able to achieve the minimum language entry standard of their chosen universities.

4.4.3 EXPERIENCE, OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

All of the students had remarkably similar observations about their Chinese education. They described being at school for around ten hours a day, studying up to 11 subjects such as geography, biology, Chinese, English, maths and physics. It was common for school to start between 6.30 am and 7.30 am and not finish until 5.30 pm, with additional evening and weekend classes. Class sizes were large and could contain sixty students. The method of instruction was very teacher centred and focussed on rote learning, exam preparation and hours of homework.

4.4.3.1 Crystal

As a boarding student, Crystal's days were even longer than the day students' and she was coerced into attending classes on Saturday, a factor that contributing to her leaving school before her final year.

> *Some students they don't want to attend (*Saturday classes*) but the teacher said (*if*) you cannot come ... anything related to the exam result we don't (*won't*) respond. We don't*

responsibility for that. If you get bad result it's because you are not attending the class. So they forced us …. That's a lot of pressure.

She said her education provided little opportunity for independent thought or expression and only one answer was considered correct.

*In high school we don't discuss with each other. ... Most of the time, answers only one (*one right answer*). In Chinese Gao Kao (*Putonghua for 'high examination') *they have very specific answers. If you didn't mention this word or this sentence, you didn't get a mark.*

Crystal's English lessons started in junior middle school with a focus on learning grammar, writing, reading and learning vocabulary by rote and little if any attempt to teach communicative language. Oral English was not taught in her Chinese classroom, and she found the formal language she learned in China was not used in Australia.

*The first class is for, 'what's your name?' and 'my name is…'. And I remember the text book, it said we can do number for middle school, and 'How are you' and "I am fine thank you...and you?". And 'how do you do', like this. But when I come, came to Australia ..., I have never heard 'how do you do'. ... We're always going, 'how are you, how have you been?' It didn't help much (*in Australia*) for spoken English.*

Vocabulary and grammar rules were taught by rote, not usage.

(Teachers) *ask you to memorise English (*rules*) like why we use 's'. ... Teacher say one word and we need to write down the word, the different meaning of the words, the property of the words. And noun or adjective, something like that.*

Her first experience of Western education in the Unilearn foundation program (Aoji) was vastly different.

The first time I went to Aoji I felt really really relaxed because … we have class like 9 o'clock and finished at 3 and ... assignments not so much … we have more discussing and we do some more discussion about the topic. … Whatever you doing, wrong or right, good or bad, teacher in Aoji will encourage you. That you are, are good. You are not the worst one.

Crystal also experienced another significant distinction between Chinese and Western education. For the first time, she encountered the notion that there may be more than one right answer.

Like, answers not only one. In high school, most of the time, answers only one. … you can only think one. I think Western education style allowed you to have different thinking.

Although Crystal had found high school reading quite easy, she struggled when she started studying English for Academic Purposes.

*I didn't find any difficulty until I came to Aoji and I have to read IELTS article. It's very hard. It's very hard and it depends too on the question ... the question asked is very tricky. (*It can have*) two meanings, and sometimes says the opposite words (*antonyms*) or similar meaning words (*synonyms*) instead of words that appear in original article. If you do not have enough vocabulary it's very hard.*

4.4.3.2 Alice

Alice said she too was frustrated with the Chinese teaching style which she said was incompatible with her learning style.

Teachers just write notes on the blackboard every time. Just write note. … We just taking notes and you have to spend a lot of time to read the notes after your class, because teachers trying to push a lot for us. ... We don't have time to talk to the teacher in class. It's impossible in class. Impossible. And you just listening, no questions. … Some people ...

are really good when they are taking notes but I can't. … I have to spend ... twice as much time as some people.

She also described the impact of large classes and how teachers tended to focus on the best and worst of students, leaving those in the middle to fend for themselves.

*Always the teachers concentrate on the two sides, the best one or the bottom one. The middle one like me, they always stay in the middle. Like, I'm not really good and I'm not really bad. ... After exam they have a list ... with your result and where is your position. ... I always stay in the 20, 21 (*in a typical class of 50*). This kind of students, teachers not really ... care about you or think about you.*

Alice described her English classes at school as heavily focussed on grammar, and vocabulary, which she never had an opportunity to use, because her English teacher couldn't speak English.

My English teacher in middle school, her can't really speak English in my point of view, so she never read out. She was really bad. (sighing) *… Like, she was trying to read the whole paragraph for us once, she couldn't finish it. Like, it was amazing for me! ... And her pronunciation was just ... so difficult for her. Because it's like she didn't read out the English. … It just like grammars, and lots of vocab...what you call it? Vocabulary. And I don't think, ah, much more grammars you need to memorise. (laughing). You never got to use it. … In the English class she use Chinese to explain to us, and she never like have some communication in English with us. She only explain the grammar every day, and like, it's hard only to memorise the grammar, without using.*

4.4.3.3 Penny

Penny too described her school experience as very teacher-centred, and marked by exam preparation and intense competition to get into a Chinese university.

*My teacher do speaking and teaching, students do the notes and no any discussing. Just teacher, just saying some theory about the question ... Many exam paper you had to do. (*It was*) very hard (*to get into university*). … Depends on your score. (*If*) it's high maybe you can do the high (*prestigious*) school. If you low, it just like the diploma school.*

The focus was on simple vocabulary when Penny started learning English in primary school, with no attempt made to teach communicative language.

*Just ABCDEFG and a few words like 'apple', 'banana'. One lesson like one story, you just need to know the vocabulary, the grammar, yeah, just focus on this. (*Spoken English*) maybe just to reading the story (*that is, reading out loud*), not like we interview now.*

Penny acknowledged that her Chinese English teacher was neither experienced nor trained to teach English.

*Not so very good, just like completed at the university in China, and to do (*became*) the teacher … In one lesson, just ten sentences, just speak and read … So I think not good. … In China you* (it is) *very difficult to improve your English. You cannot speak, you just do the paperwork. Not enough.*

Penny found studying in the Unilearn program much less stressful than her Chinese schools.

*In the first year, in the first semester I think very easy (*than*) in my high school because you have more time, more free, (*whereas*) ... In China, just study.*

4.4.3.4 James

While supporting the other students' observations, James made other salient points. He felt his education had dual goals; on one hand there was an unrelenting focus on exam preparation, but on the other he felt he was being groomed to be a better citizen.

It's not much like career orientated or focussed. It was more like exam focus and also the entire education system gives me the feeling of they really trying to tell you how to be a good person sometimes. You know? What is kind of like 'face' of the Chinese background culture. They try to tell you how can you really benefit the society, take care of other people. But most of time, we feel like we have lots of work to do. We really have to focus on our exam, you know, to go to a better university or better school.

He said exam preparation and competition started even in primary school.

*After … primary school you have to take a exam so to actually go into your junior high, but which junior high school you can go to depends on your grade … (*Exam preparation starts*) in the primary school ... and in the junior high and high school pretty much the same. In the first two years you study the entire teaching material in (*for*) the three years. In the last year you just pretty much review. So the high school was even more serious because you have actually to take the biggest test, the ... high school graduation test so you can actually go to university.*

James also described an under-resourced education system with too few teachers, many of whom were inadequately trained, who paid attention to the best students only.

Because I am not that interested in study as hard as other students, so my grade was a little bit low. And you know the school's outcome depends on the outcome of your students' grade so teacher will pay more attention on the student who actually learns well and got better grades ... The entire education system in China is like that.

James, like the other students, said there was no opportunity to communicate in his English classes.

Our teacher was always pretty good with grammar but now think back, her pronunciation probably not that great. … We didn't have to speak much English. We didn't really use as a communication tool. We only focus on our spelling, grammar. The entire education system was built up on the exams so you couldn't really test millions of students to interview them to test their speaking skills or something so you can only put on the paper and test their grammar.

4.4.3.5 Daisy

Daisy's high school experience was also highly structured and very focussed on study.

University is very hard and it's fit for people who get great mark. Yes, so I don't have any social life when I was in high school. All my time spent on study because I need to get good mark to enter into a good university. Because you know in China you must get bachelor degree or maybe master degree and then you can find a job. That is difference with Australia.

With a special interest in physics, and hoping to do well academically, Daisy tried to ask the teacher questions, but was rebuffed.

*Because I like physics and sometimes I ask my teacher some questions it's not include in the books and my teacher just told me 'you can read all you can, do research, don't have (*leave*) to me. My aim is to teach you the knowledge in the book and then you can go to university. That's it.'*

She described her language classes as highly regimented.

People don't have much communication … just the teacher keep on talking talking talking talking and we just writing notes and listening to him. We don't have time to discuss

*questions, we don't have time to go to teachers (*with*) some questions if we feel confused. We just need to do is to remember and to learn what the teacher told us and then do exercise because our aim is to enter into the university.*

Like the other students, Daisy also criticised the focus on structure over communication.

*For Chinese education you need to memory a lot of thing, with grammar you need to memory it. The vocabulary you have to know how to spell and you have to remember it every day but the problems (*as*) I said it's nothing when you can do it in paper but you can't use it in life. What's that mean? Nothing.*

Daisy described her experience at the Unilearn foundation program as the opposite of her Chinese education experience.

Yes, is quite different. I feel happy … You know me yeah? (I was Daisy's English and Business teacher). *Because when I am in class I can ask you what I want to know and every time even it's not class (*out of class time*) … You are patient to answer my question. Yeah, that's what I appreciate.*

DISCUSSION

The students spoke critically, and with a high level of uniformity, about their education in China. In discussing their language classes, the students described teachers who had graduated with degrees in English, but with little teaching experience. One student's English teacher had never met a native-English speaker and struggled to read a paragraph from a book. The language problems the students experienced later in Australia were partly a consequence of their early language study. As Burns (1991) pointed out, the difficulties students face when studying in a second language environment are multiplied if the English they learned in Asia was a standard

form with formal grammar. Crystal identified this; she was taught language no longer, if ever, current in Australia.

Some minor incongruities appear from the students' narratives. Firstly, despite little oral practice at school, three of the students did well in the *Speaking* component of their first IELTS tests. Daisy scored IELT 6.0 in all macro-skills, so feasibly her *Speaking* score was a reflection of her language skills overall. However Crystal and Alice scored 5.0 and 5.5 respectively in their first IELTS tests, but both achieved a 6.0 in the *Speaking* sub-test. Crystal's score is particularly noteworthy. She took her first IELTS test after two terms in Unilearn, and although communication was encouraged, she was a reluctant participant. A class record notes 'Crystal is a quiet student who prefers to listen rather than speak' (personal record). Alice took her first IELTS test in Unilearn Term III, also scoring higher for the *Speaking* component than the other sub-scores. Her oral progress may be attributed to a readiness to participate in class discussions. Another observation is that despite the focus on grammar during the students' Chinese education, it is still very much a weakness, demonstrated in the transcripts of their interviews. Alice made the observation, 'what is the point of learning grammar if you don't get to use it' and she may well be correct. The grammar rules that were drummed into these Chinese students may not have become embedded into their language because they didn't have the opportunity to use them communicatively.

Burns's (1991, p.71) research into study and stress in international students reinforced findings from earlier studies (for example, Ballard & Clanchy, 1984) that found fundamental differences in educational styles and philosophies between Asian and Western academic traditions. Overseas students in Burns's study commented that in their experience, teachers provided all the information and notes, whereas in Australia students had to be far more active, doing the reading, making notes, and involving themselves in class discussions; their earlier experience led to difficulties in coping with academic matters. This was also the early experience of the students in

this study. Schooled in the Chinese tradition, they too found adaptation difficult in their first year of study, although they adjusted over time.

4.5 Academic background Australia

4.5.1 Education

After finishing their foundation year in July 2006 the students began making their way to Australia. All had received provisional university offers but because they had not met the language entry standard (IELTS 6.5) they needed to take additional classes, which they completed at language institutions associated with their chosen universities. None of the students was required to sit another IELTS test prior to university entry.

4.5.1.1 Crystal

Crystal completed an eight week language course at the Centre for Macquarie English, before beginning her Diploma of Hospitality Management at the International College of Management Sydney (ICMS). The College's language threshold was an overall IELTS 6.0, with at least an IELTS 6.0 in speaking and IELTS 5.5 in writing (ICMS, n.d.). Although she couldn't demonstrate she met this prerequisite, she was admitted because she had completed the language course. Crystal left before completing the Diploma. She had completed two semesters of industry training, first in housekeeping at Sydney's Vibe Hotel and then as a room service attendant at Sydney's Menzies Hotel, but couldn't complete the industry placement hours within the allotted time frame. After withdrawing from ICMS, Crystal completed a Bachelor of Professional Accounting at the Holmes Institute. Using credits from her hospitality studies, she graduated in July 2010, before enrolling in a Master of Accounting (Commerce) at the University of New South Wales.

Crystal also registered to complete a CPA (Certified Practising Accountant) qualification concurrently in the final semester of her Master's degree, but deferred the examination. She is yet to finish.

4.5.1.2 Alice

Alice studied English at Macquarie English Language Centre for 15 weeks, before starting her Diploma of Hospitality Management at the International College of Management. She too couldn't demonstrate she met the language pre-requisite, but was also accepted because she had completed language studies. As part of her diploma, Alice was required to complete 1,000 hours of hospitality industry training and was selected by the Sheraton Hotel for an internship.

> *All the hotels every year they came to our college to do the interview with the students and I got the Sheraton … I did three interviews with them and (*after*) the third interview … they called me and said 'you have passed. You can come for a job' and I like 'aaaahhhh oh God so happy' 'cos … it was like 150 of us and I'm the first (*of the*) group of people has been employed.*

After finishing the Diploma, Alice gained a Bachelor of Professional Accounting at the Holmes Institute, using credits from her hospitality studies to complete her degree in two and a half years, She then enrolled in a Master of Financial Analysis at the University of New South Wales, graduating in mid-2012.

4.5.1.3 Penny

Penny took a slightly different route into her tertiary studies, completing just five weeks of English language studies at the Macquarie English Language Centre before starting a Diploma of Commerce at the Sydney Institute of Business Technology (SIBT). Located on Macquarie University's Sydney campuses, SIBT is a part of the private Navitas education group which provides alternative pathway programs for international and domestic students, operating under contract

with the University and using its facilities and staff. Students who have not achieved the academic and English requirements for direct entry into Macquarie University can complete an SIBT diploma, the equivalent of a first year Macquarie University bachelor degree, articulating into the second year of their degree (Navitas, n.d.). The one-year, eight-subject Diploma of Commerce, which Penny finished in June 2008, gave her entry into the second year of her three-year Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting at Macquarie University. Penny acknowledges she chose this pathway program because she knew she did not have the language skills to enter directly into university and did not want to spend an extended period in Australia learning English.

> *If I go to Macquarie I need to IELTS test 6.5. I* (would) *need to continue* (in a language course) *maybe 30 weeks.*

After graduating in July 2010 and with changes to migration policy imminent, Penny enrolled immediately in the first trimester of an eight months Master of Business at the Sydney Campus of the University of New England (UNE), which she finished in February 2011.

She completed the master's program with the express purpose of using the points gained to support her application for permanent residence. She described it as quick and easy and found the content manageable because it replicated material from her under-graduate degree.

> *It's a Master of Business, New England University … in Sydney campus. Actually this master degree I not study very well because during my study I had to work part-time. It's (*the degree*) very easy. Because this course is just eight subjects, and this school have three semesters in one year, so just eight months I can get. Is not very hard because when I graduated from Macquarie some knowledge I have to learn it (*I had learned*) so when I go to my Master degree some knowledge is repeat.*

4.5.1.4 James

James enrolled at Griffith University (GU) in a Bachelor of Commerce after studying English for Academic Purposes (EAP) at the Griffith English Language Institute (GELI) for 10 weeks. He was not required to take another IELTS test (GU, 2011).

> *The first year* (of the degree) *you have to study 8 subjects, what they call core subjects, all* (in) *the Commerce school. That was give you a basic idea of how the business structure was work from Accounting to Economics to Corporate Finance ... From the second year you have to do your course that was more related to your discipline. … You also have a choice of doing a minor or electives. That was purely based on your own interest in kind of stuff you want to do.*

Graduating in second semester 2009, and wanting to secure additional migration points, James enrolled in a Master of Finance majoring in Applied Finance at Griffith University in Brisbane, and graduated in second semester 2010.

4.5.1.5 Daisy

Although Daisy had the highest language score of all the students (IELTS 6.0) it was not quite at the level required by Macquarie University, which had made her a provisional offer.

> *Because Macquarie University, they requested 6.5. … I (*decided to*) come here earlier to learn English here rather than go out study at China because in here you have more chance to speak.*

After 3 months of language studies at Macquarie's English Language Centre, followed by a Bachelor of Finance, also at Macquarie, Daisy enrolled in an online Diploma of Financial Planning (RG146) which gave her the required Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) certification to provide financial advice (ASIC, n.d.) With her sights set on finance career Daisy

opted to look for work, rather than undertake postgraduate studies as many of her Chinese friends had.

DISCUSSION

The pragmatism with which two of the students, James and Penny, approached their Australian education in Australia becomes evident in this section. Both were conscious of changing migration rules and completed postgraduate studies to boost their PR chances. Daisy was similarly focused on her career, completing her education as quickly as she could so she could find a job. In contrast, Alice and Crystal vacillated in their study choices, and while both achieved their academic goals, their equivocation cost them dearly in terms of PR.

Although none of the students was able to demonstrate they had their universities' threshold English language level, they were accepted nevertheless. Feast (2002) questioned the morality of admitting international students without the language skills to enable them to succeed; as one of the language advisers said, universities are not setting them up to fail, but are setting them up to have a very hard time (see Chapter 5.5).

Other factors influence students' success at university, such as motivation, self-regulation, and levels of study engagement (Phakiti et al., 2013). My observations over the year I taught them in China, supported by end of term reports (personal notes, 2005), confirm that three in particular demonstrated these qualities. ('*James is a highly motivated student who always completes class and homework to a high level.' 'Alice is an engaged student who actively works towards developing her language skills.' 'Daisy is making excellent progress because of her commitment and engagement.')*

Penny's term report identified an issue that she acknowledged during our interviews for this study; her shyness impeded her progress. ('*Penny's language development is being held back by*

her reticence') (personal note, 2005). However she demonstrated a high level of self-regulation in how she managed her studies to achieve her goals. Bandura (1986, as cited in Phakiti et.al., 2013, p.243) describes students' self-regulation as 'monitoring and evaluation of their performance or cognitive action, thereby planning what to do next to achieve a goal.' Penny's self-regulation is evident in how she planned every step of her time in Australia to achieve her goals. She chose pathway programs to avoid additional language study. She enrolled in a master's degree she could finish in eight months so she would have time to improve her language before the migration changes. Even her choice of a *General Training* IELTS test, which she perceived as easier than the *Academic* test, demonstrates her self-regulation. Of all the students, Penny started with the weakest language and has done least to improve it. Although she was the only student to fail a subject during her degrees, she nevertheless managed to graduate with two qualifications, which supports Phakiti et. al.'s proposition that language is not the only predictor of a student's capacity to succeed.

4.5.2 EXPERIENCE, OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

4.5.2.1 Adjusting to Western academic language and conventions

The students were quite perceptive in discussing their progress and barriers at university. Schooled in the Chinese tradition, all but Daisy said they found it hard to adjust to Western education protocols. Their language capacity concerned them particularly.

4.5.2.1.1 Crystal

Crystal was aware her English, even after exiting her pathway language studies, was inadequate.

> *I don't think it's* (her language level) *enough for me to study in college. Because I still find a lot of difficulty in group discussing and doing assignment and doing summary from article. A lot of kind of assignment, like you collect thirty articles and doing each one for 200* (word) *summary is not easy.*

Despite this, she did not advocate testing students after they finish a language course prior to university entrance, because she felt students' language skills improve as they are studying.

> *I don't think it's if the student doing the test before they go to university is helpful because sometime our English skill is improving during the study. Sometimes at the beginning I found difficulty but I think study step by step and ... your language is going up (*improving*).*

Crystal's results belie this expectation; after five years in tertiary education, although her IELTS overall score had increased half a band point, her *Speaking* score regressed by half a point. This situation is not unusual. Craven's (2012) research with 40 undergraduate students who were IELTS tested pre and post study found that just over half improved their IELTS score after two or three years in tertiary education, while twelve exited university with the same score and eight regressed by half a band. A similar study by O'Loughlin and Arkoudis (2009) compared the IELTS entry scores of 63 Asian students with IELTS scores from tests they took in their final semester of study, and found the language of a third was either the same, or worse.

Crystal felt her language level held her back at university and she said she hadn't developed her oral presentation skills. Making academic presentations was not required of her in China, and it wasn't until her foundation program that she had even heard the term; her first exposure to PowerPoint was through television advertising.

> *I only know presentations (*as*) giving presents to other people* (gift-giving). … *I heard the 'presentation' word in Aoji first time and before I see the drama in the television and I saw them do a promotion about one product and they have the PowerPoint introduce that.*

Crystal said she didn't participate fully in university tutorials because she felt constrained because of her language. She didn't like having to deliver presentations but managed them by becoming conversant with the topic and by rehearsing.

*I feel nervous to speak at the front of a lot of people. And I'm afraid I don't know what to talk to them, sometimes. But if I ready standing (*understanding*) about the topic and ready understanding of the structure of the Power Points then I will know what will I speak to. ... (*my*) academic language is not good enough, so I usually use very simple language to explain. That's why I have not enough minutes to talk (*don't talk for long enough*).*

4.5.2.1.2 Alice

Cognisant of the difficulties international students face adjusting both to language and a new set of academic protocols, Alice felt the focus on tertiary study skills in her pre-university language classes helped her.

*They give you some tutorials regarding how to do the assignments, how to do the essays, how do the essays look in Australia. Is totally different from China. And how does the Accounting and Business, Business course, look like. Give you the basic kind of how you say, concepts, for you. … It's really necessary to do it because when I came to here, is like, if I don't do the language course I'm going to go straight away to the university; I can't catch them (*understand the lectures*), especially like Macquarie University. ... my boyfriend's experience ... (*he went*) straight away go to the university course and the lecturers always have huge big lectures, like hundreds students and the tutorials, he can't really catch (*understand*) what they are talking about … the way the lecturer lecture you is like, 'You are university student. You will be able to understanding what I am saying.' But for the overseas student … is kind of different. Their level is only high school or maybe middle level English speaking.*

4.5.2.1.3 Penny

In discussing the most difficult element of using academic English, Penny supported Daisy's view that speaking was difficult, saying that even with good vocabulary, having the self-assurance to express herself was a challenge.

I feel the confidence is very important. If you have more confidence, you can speak. ... If not very confidence you very shy, it's cannot. Even though you have enough vocabulary.

Penny found the structure of her course different from her education in China.

*Tutorials, lectures, quiz, mmm ...assignment .... We also – presentation and exam but in Macquarie if you find exam is not pass, no matter what marks in before, you fail (*in other words, you have to pass your final exam to pass the subject*). It's* (education) *is very difficult ... different.*

Although Penny only achieved an IELTS 6.0 well after she had completed both her degrees, she said international students needed that level of English at a minimum.

*I think if you want to pass the exam in your university you need that score (*IELTS 6.0*). For example some people in SIBT (*think that*) to study the Diploma is very easy, but you go to Macquarie it's very difficult, so the language is very important for China students.*

It should be noted that an IELTS test that Penny took in April 2011, a General English test completed after she had completed two degrees in Australia, resulted in an overall score of 5.5. Although her listening had improved by a half a point, and her speaking by a full point, her overall IELTS score was exactly the same level as when she left China. On that basis, it is difficult not to assume she completed her academic studies at an IELTS 5.5.

4.5.2.1.5 James

James's opinion was that even an IELTS 6.0 was barely enough.

*IELTS 6.0 is I think is just is just enough for them (*NESB students*). For them to actually sit in the lecture room, to understand what the teacher is talking about. But if you really want to put a student into a fit into the society you need at least a 7.0 I believe.*

James said he struggled when he first started university, particularly with oral communication.

> *You understand Chinese education system was based on exam focus … So I think I was a little bit struggle when I came. ... The speaking and communication part was the biggest challenge because we didn't really use them (*in China*) on a daily basis.*

James said following large lectures was difficult, but being able to take part in tutorial discussions helped.

> *Ah, the lecture was quite new for international students because it was delivered in a large number of class, they have usually typical 200 students in a classroom. And the tutorial was more like a small classroom, around 20 students per room, so you can actually discuss the issues and questions with your tutor so it helps a lot. … I feel a little bit embarrassed actually speaking English because I didn't pronounce well and sometimes I feel got a little bit of trouble when I want to express my opinion correctly and sometimes just feels like waste of time.*

He said it was challenging but helpful when local students and tutors included international students in discussions.

> *Sometimes* (local) *students really encourage international students to talk. Sometimes … our tutor put our* (us) *into group discussion and random select team leader to speak up ... It helps a lot in a way. You can actually discuss your knowledge with Aussie student or local student. … If you really want to learn something you really need to participate. That helps a lot.*

He said that despite the differences in the Chinese and Western education styles, with the right attitude international students shouldn't have difficulty adjusting.

International are going to probably find it a little bit of a struggle at the beginning … but I think as time pass by we all tend to adopt into the other structure and form so not that much of an issue, I think, if you really concentrate on what the teacher is saying ... As I said it is always back to the students' attitude. If you really want to concentrate you will sit in the first row and the first row is never full.

Although he found it quite hard in the beginning, James felt the pre-university Unilearn and language programs helped him adjust quite quickly.

I was actually pretty lucky because … the program we did in Langfang was helping us and we didn't really feel struggle … and when we come here I did my language course for 10 weeks and that one it was like a pre uni study. It was really nice, and it gives me a smooth connection between pre uni and actual uni study.

4.5.2.1.5 Daisy

Two quite important elements mark Daisy's experience in the Australian education system as different from those of the other students in the study, and may have influenced her approach and perceptions. Firstly, the question of permanent residence was never a concern. She knew that when she and her partner married (as they did in February 2011), because he was a permanent resident she would become one too. This led to the second point of difference. As a consequence of her entitlement to PR she did not need to take a postgraduate degree to help her secure additional migration points. Daisy said her years at university were relatively stress-free and she enjoyed the challenges of a new style of learning. (Although it can't be argued unequivocally, she may have found university less stressful than other students in the study, because of her higher language ability on arrival, and an extended period in language classes before she started her degree. She may also have felt less concerned about achieving good marks, without the burden of permanent residence hanging over her.)

I don't think there's a lot of difficults. For me is okay and if I am learning and I don't know (something), I will go to ... I will ask my tutor.

Daisy also viewed the challenges of new types of academic assessment such as presentations, as another skill to be learned.

*You know, when you are learn driving you don't have experience, but (*when*) you are learning for presentation, same thing.*

DISCUSSION

Despite their foundation year in China and pathway classes in Australia, all except Daisy experienced some level of difficulty adjusting to the Western tertiary system, particularly when they were required to make oral contributions. Although oral practice had been a focus of their foundation year and pathway programs, it did not fully compensate for the years of passive participation in China. Burns's (1991) study of first-year undergraduates found most from overseas students felt they had not been prepared for tertiary study, which in his view was not unexpected given the known teaching and learning styles adopted to attain academic success in most south-east Asian countries.

For the students in this study, their language levels caused them most difficulties, and all but Daisy said their language was not adequate.

Findings from four studies comparing NESB students beginning with an average IELTS 5.0 before studying English for a maximum of three months found that their average band score increased by less than half a point. Those who started with an IELTS 6.0 tended to remain at the same level, while those who started with an IELTS 7.0 tended to receive a lower score on the second test (Green, 2004, as cited in Craven, 2012). Another factor Green (2005, pp. 55-56) identified was that Chinese students undertaking pre-sessional language study made less improvement overall

than those of European or 'other' backgrounds. It is not surprising, therefore, that the students in this study struggled with academic English. Four of the five had come to Australian with an IELTS 5.5 and spent between five to fifteen weeks learning English. If Green's findings were applied to these students, none would have progressed sufficiently to meet their universities' entrance standard. James had taken a full year to move a band point prior to coming to Australia and it is highly unlikely he would have gained another band point in the 10 weeks of English he studied before starting his degree. Penny was still testing at IELTS 5.5 after she had finished her two degrees, while Crystal took more than four years to advance a half a band point to IELTS 6.0. Alice took more than four years to move a band point to IELTS 6.5. Daisy had an IELTS 6.0 and studied English for an additional three months before starting university, and felt she made good progress using English both in and outside class. While her IELTS score may have increased during her language course it is not possible to say so with any certainty, because she, like the other students, was not required to take an IELTS test before starting her degree.

A study by O'Loughlin and Arkoudis (2009) investigating IELTS exit score gains in higher education compared the IELTS entry scores of 63 undergraduate and postgraduate Asian students with IELTS scores from tests they took in their final semester of study. Thirty-three achieved a band score increase of 0.5 and 10 scored a band increase of 1.0 or more. Eighteen stayed the same and two regressed by half an IELTS band point. In other words, two thirds progressed but the language of a third was either the same or worse (p.53). The study also found the greatest improvement was in the receptive skills, *Listening* and *Reading* (p.1). A later study by Craven (2012) compared IELTS results of 40 undergraduates, each of whom took two IELTS tests, separated by a gap of almost two years. Only eight students increased their overall score by a full band. Fourteen achieved a half-a- band increase, 12 stayed the same and 6 regressed. In other words, just over half were able to achieve better IELTS results during approximately two years in tertiary study. Direct correlations are not possible between the students in the 2009 and 2012 research and the

students in this study because the latter do not have IELTS tests taken over an extended interval. However the earlier studies demonstrate the difficulties international students face in trying to achieve IELTS band shift.

IELTS is a measure of a candidate's language competence at a given point, and the literature is divided as to whether it can predict academic performance (Phakiti et. al., 2013). Nonetheless, although most of the students themselves identified that their language on entry was inadequate, all passed their degrees, although they found some aspects difficult. Studies on the experiences of international NESB students suggest they often struggle with a wide array of aspects of academic life at Western universities (Terraschke & Wahid, 2011) and this was the experience of these students. Schooled in the Chinese tradition, most found it hard to adjust to Western education protocols, despite spending 12 months in the Unilearn program which focussed not just on language and study skills, but on Western academic conventions such as oral discussions, presentations and academic writing. Of course it is not just international students who face challenges when first they enter university. As Burns (1991, p.63) points out, those who have been engaged in counselling local students know full well that many of the concerns raised by overseas students are shared by local students. Nevertheless his research with first year local and international students showed that the overseas group had significantly greater difficulties adjusting to academic requirements, particularly with managing the demands of study, independent learning, language skills, participation and time management than the local group.

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) pathway programs can help by focusing on improving students' level of English while also teaching academic study skills and the common genres of students' academic disciplines (Terraschke & Wahid, 2011). This was certainly James's experience; he said his EAP program was like an introduction to university. Although all the students said the pathway programs prepared them well for their tertiary studies, they still struggled in the

beginning. Some of their problems arose from trying to adjust to Western cultural norms. Hirsh (2007) argues there is also scope within pathway programs to address acculturation issues. Terraschke and Wahid's comparison of students who completed a pre-sessional EAP course with students who gained direct entry to their degree found both groups had similar experiences in terms of listening, speaking and reading. However, the EAP students were better able to talk about their use of learning strategies, appeared to be more confident in dealing with written assessments and were found to have a better understanding of the demands of their course. Students who did not attend an EAP course, on the other hand, expressed a greater sense of dissatisfaction and disappointment when their high academic expectations were not fulfilled.

Murray and O'Loughlin (2007, p.5) propose that direct entry pathway programs may meet students' needs by providing a more comprehensive development of English language and academic preparation skills, as opposed to simply gaining a language proficiency test score. Dooey (2010) agrees. Her study with EAP pathway students revealed that readiness to study in a tertiary institution goes well beyond the achievement of an English language proficiency score for entry. However one should not substitute for the other. Rather, students would benefit from a pathway program that prepares them for tertiary study, and a complementary standard measure of English language competence. Feast (2002, p.70) argues there is a moral and financial need to ensure that fee- paying international students are capable of succeeding; one obvious way of achieving this is to ensure their language is at a level that allows them to participate. Because pathway programs lack a standardized test (Murray & O'Loughlin), it would seem reasonable that universities require students to take an IELTS test on completion of their pathway programs, to make sure they have achieved university entrance standards before they start their degrees. This would not be a popular measure with students or universities, but would address some of the issues emerging in this study, that plague international education.

4.5.2.2 Costs and benefits

International students pay considerably more for their tertiary education than domestic students; the students in this study estimated they paid between $60,000 and $100,000 in fees alone. While some said it cost too much, all felt the personal growth they experienced in Australia compensated to a considerable degree.

4.5.2.2.1 Crystal

Crystal put the cost of her Bachelor of Accounting at $30,000 and her Master of Commerce at a further $30,000, but felt the outcome justified the cost, particular for her master's degree.

> *I think it's worth for my whole life change. 'Cos I think my life also got changed things (*when*) I entered to (*the University of*) NSW. …* (The Australian education) *is quite different from Chinese one. Very specially I got the practical experience – not even in the Accounting part but ... during the work I have gain a lot I think comparing to the students who graduate from Chinese university. I got more social experience, working experience and know how to communicate. .... I know how to deal with environment when you feel some difficulties ... Australian university ... they teach us knowledge in English, it's quite different, logical* (compared) *to Chinese, and also lecture, lecture independently thinking, that's what we call critical thinking. That's quite different.*

4.5.2.2.2 Alice

Alice felt her education had been expensive, estimating the cost of her study for degree fees alone at $80,000.

> *The master is really expensive because that's at the University of New South Wales. I think … I paying $4,050 for one subject. And I got eight subject. That's roughly $32,000. The under-grad degree, I think the average for each subject is $2,000. We got to 24 (*subjects*).*

Despite recounting some inconsistent pedagogic experiences (discussed later in this chapter) Alice nevertheless felt that overall studying in Australia was a richer and more beneficial experience than studying in China.

> *Here, you have to force yourself to study a lot, and of course you learn something even from study by yourself. But for currently Chinese universities, they're not push you that much to do everything by yourself. And also the environment. You don't need to dealing with anything like rent. Like I have to rent a room by myself, cooking by myself. They (*Chinese universities*) do everything for you. And you just stay there four years, spent your four years' time in the university, and then you graduate and ask yourself, 'what did you learn?' … Here I think they thought you are adult, you will learn, manage, control yourself and study and life and work. Everything.*

4.5.2.2.3 Penny

Penny estimated that her education fees cost her family around $100,000.

> *Currently, in Macquarie one subject is $3,000 so is 24 subjects is so is 72,000. Yeah. The master is almost, my university is very cheaper but normally is also 3,000 per subject so is 24 plus 72.*

She was tentative when asked what her parents expected her expensive Australian education would achieve.

> (Hesitant) *High education knowledge? ... and get a difference experience than other person. … and independent in Australia.*

Penny argued that Chinese students contributed significantly to Australia's economy and the Government needed to address the migration issue by, as she put it, 'giving something back'. In

other words, in return for their economic input, the government should be prepared to offer international students permanent residence.

> *If my family want to get PR I will suggest to them to (*go to*) another country. Because in this year (*now*), Canada and America, the education is good and they can get the PR. The policy is open. The money the same.*

4.5.2.2.4 James

James estimated his university fees at around $78,000 and was not at all tentative when asked whether he felt it was worth it.

> *I think it worth it, because education really works. I don't really think you can compare how much you pay in China, how much you pay here. Education quality is way better from Australian to Chinese ones (*Australia's education is better than China's*). … If you can afford it, I think it's worth it from the personal perspective. … It just gives me an idea of another education system, I think that's one of the most important things. I have been used to the Chinese way of thinking and working, for like 20 years, all my life, and now I think ... you know why people … think different ways and you know why people behave different in these two countries, and just (*pause*), just general good experience. …* (pause) P*ersonal experience I think. Life experience.*

4.5.2.2.5 Daisy

Daisy wasn't as complimentary about her Australian education which she estimated cost $60,000, expressing mixed views when asked about its value. On the one hand, she strongly agreed when asked if her Finance degree had helped her in choosing a viable business.

> *Yes, definitely. Because if you choose a business, you will see the profit and the loss statements. … If the business don't make any money, you don't buy any business. … I study finance in my university, and I know how to choose a business, like how to calculate*

the cost. When they give you the documents, they always hide some cost, because they want you to pay higher. ... But if you have the business knowledge, you know 'oh, that's not true'.

However Daisy counter-argued that the cost of the degree didn't deliver value for money, saying the financial knowledge that helped her buy her business was acquired in her first year of study only.

Because I learned something from the university, but not that much. I think experience is more important. ... In Australia overseas students, they pay like triple the local. If I am local here I would say like it's worth, but it's like we pay triple than them, but we didn't learn that much. … When you (I) *buy the shop, I use some accounting knowledge but it's only the first year what I learned, not the whole three years. Yeah.* (In) *the three years, I learned a lot of different knowledge, but the useful thing is like a third (*only a third is useful*).*

Nevertheless Daisy said she did not regret doing her degree in Australia, because of the opportunity she gained in terms of personal growth and self-development.

It's like a ... it's like a ... you do this first, you learn more, you develop yourself more, then it's another step of the life. You can't say I regret.

She was emphatic that a Chinese degree would not have delivered the same outcomes.

No. Because if I, you know for me, the most important thing is I come to Australia is the culture. The culture helped me a lot, not the degree. If I in China, the culture is quite different. There, the degree is much more ... and you always focus on degree but you wouldn't use that in your life and it doesn't help you to do your work better so I don't think I can achieve what I did if I am still in China.

DISCUSSION

Bodycott's (2009) synthesis of a number of studies found the comparative cost of tuition fees and living expenses was a *pull* factor that helped students decide where to study. However although it helped James and his parents to decide on Australia as a study destination, it didn't seem particularly important with the other students, although two rated their fees as costly.

The common theme that ran through the students' assessment of the benefits of their Australian education was the sense of personal growth and independence they developed.

Crystal saw it as an experience that changed her life, developing her communication skills and capacity for critical thinking. Alice felt that her Australian experience gave her the skills to live independently, as she put it, in '*study and life and work*'. Penny said that it delivered a different experience and independence. For James it provided an experience of a different education system, and the knowledge that flowed from living in another culture, while Daisy felt she was able to achieve much more than she would have been able to in China. Their responses are highly consistent with studies (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2012; Bodycott, 2009) which found that international students were influenced by their desire to gain a better understanding of the West, and to gain different experiences.

Given their parents' pivotal role in facilitating their study in Australia, it seemed inconsistent that when the students discussed the benefits of their education they were very focussed on themselves; there was no discussion of how their families would benefit. Bodycott and Lai (2012) suggest that in supporting their children's overseas study, and the employment and citizenship opportunities that flow from it, parents in the PRC make an investment in their own survival and family future. This concept of filial piety is reciprocal, according to Bodycott (2009) who says parents make whatever sacrifices necessary to give their children the best education, but in return expect their children to provide for their future care. Bodycott and Lai propose that research

inadvertently (and wrongly) characterises PRC students as highly individualistic and free to make choices of their own accord. However in this case, this is precisely how these students presented; their focus was not on the reciprocal benefits that would flow to their families, but exclusively on their own personal development and opportunities.

4.6 TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORT

The students expressed differing opinions about the level and type of assistance they received from language advisers, academics and their institutions. On one level some talked about facilities and English language help, but others saw assistance more in academic terms. Only one, Daisy, felt her university fully met her needs. Penny acknowledged assistance was available, but said she didn't seek it and nor was it proactively offered. James was more than satisfied with the help he got in his undergraduate degree but felt his career had been limited by shortcomings in his master's program at the same university. Although both attended the same institutions, Crystal and Alice differed significantly about the support they received both in their undergraduate and master's degrees.

4.6.1 Crystal

Mortified by the public humiliation she experienced from her Chinese high school teachers, Crystal found a different attitude when she sought assistance from Australian university language advisers.

> *I find them very helpful ... most of them ... They investigate your academic level and if I am too weak they will talk to me, give me some consultation, give me suggestion. … They will ask you to go to office and have a seat, take a seat, take it easy and talk like a friend.*

In contrast, Crystal criticized both the level of support and lack of facilities at the Holmes Institute, comparing it unfavourably with government tertiary institutions.

> *Holmes doesn't have campus. They just have only got one building got ten levels. Of course for student benefits they cannot do such more like the government one can do, because I think the national one (*university*), they got the support from government.*

Critical of her own approach to her studies at that time, Crystal was also critical of the academic standard at the Holmes Institute, and decided to complete a postgraduate qualification to address what she saw as inadequacies in both her institution and herself during her first degree.

> *So I don't think I learn enough in my bachelor degree* (at Holmes) *because that school, the academic level is not good as other government university and I waste too much time and I am not good study during this period. … I am going to move to a master degree at University of New South Wales. Masters of Commerce in Accounting. Because I found I want to be accountant in the future. Not the same purpose as the student for immigration purpose.*

She subsequently described her time at the University of New South Wales as ideal.

> *That's the campus I dream about, that's the study environment I dream about and also they offer a lot of student benefits as well … We did campus Wi-Fi everywhere, and … the school do provide very important and useful employment information to us, and they do have the regular workshop for how to write resume and how to do the interview. … A lot of workshop like exam help, useful exam tip, how to do exam, how to save time on exam. … Also they have life, workshop for life, entertaining, where to go. And for sports as well.*

4.6.2 Alice

In direct contrast, Alice praised the assistance she received in her undergraduate degree at the Holmes Institute, referring not to facilities but to issues that potentially affected her academic performance.

We got a smaller class and the tutors, the lecturers … give us assistance more. And the other thing for Holmes that I think is good is that we can connect … to administration levels.

She described having to go to the dean because her lecturer would not accept an assignment which was late because of an IT problem.

I went to just make an appointment with dean, and I went to him and say this problem, and straight away is solve. … I think that's quite good things. We can get to the higher levels.

In discussing her master's degree at the University of New South Wales, Alice was less concerned with the extra-curricular programs, facilities and the language support that Crystal had focussed on, and more concerned with what she perceived as a lack of academic support. She questioned whether universities have sufficient resources to accommodate international students, giving as an example being told by academics in her master's degree that they didn't have time to consult with her.

It's hard to make appointment with your lecturers or tutors to explain all the questions. … I don't feel we get enough assistance or help. … I did an appointment with … one of my lecturers, and they say, 'I won't be staying with you more than half hours, just bring the core things for you, that you want to know.' And I thinking (laughs*), 'no, my question is going to be more than for half hours.' … He say, 'I got my schedule as well. If I spend like more than this with you, the next student is going to be like, complain, or something'. … The University need to provide more (*assistance*) since we paying … actually we pay really high. Especially for the big university. I think for the big university the only good things is that they got … all the equipments. They got all the good computers like everything. But like the human resource assistance is not enough.*

She was unimpressed with one lecturer who posted an answer to a question on the online course management program *Blackboard*, and told students not to email him again about it.

> *One of the lecturers was angry, getting too many emails from the students. 'Cos he put on the Blackboard that...'.the answer is 'this'. Just do not email me again about this one'. (*sounding incredulous) *That's what their attitude to the student.*

Alice's observation is that the problem stems from too many students and too few teachers.

> *It's because of probably they got too many students. It's one excuse they are going to say. What I feel is they don't have enough lecturers. And the lecturers doing like, the students a lot* (teaching a lot of students*), but actually the resources are not enough. Like especially the teaching resources. ... With one, like, sort of core subject, they got like three or four hundred students (*sounding amazed*). Yeah, you can't* (have) *like one people* (person) *doing so many students. One of my classes got more than one hundred, like roughly 200 students. Is only one lecture one week, like ballroom, everyone sitting there. But the quality should* (will) *be low when you tutoring so many students.*

Alice acknowledged that her university offered language help for international students, although the sessions weren't well attended or well organised.

> *The university do open some help, language help ... assignment writings help ... but the student go looking for them is not like many people (*not many people attend*) . I feel like they put up ... every maybe Tuesday or Wednesday afternoon. You got two hours, you come to see us and we can help you with your assignment or something that. Actually not many student come.*

For Alice, the master's degree presented challenges she'd not faced in her undergraduate studies.

> *It's a little bit different from what I have done for the bachelor. … My feeling is like more academically and more difficult … 'cos actually we don't have any tutorials for our master lectures … They don't mention a lot about some basical (*basic*) points.*

She also described how she struggled because her lecturers assumed a knowledge she didn't possess.

> *They assume you know, have a knowledge about this course already. This course be hard because in my bachelor degree I done Accounting. Probably I did some part of the finance knowledges but not enough for the master degree. That's why I feel stress for that. … I stop my part-time job and I just pay all attention to my master degree.*

She felt a lack of a consistent structure and approach to teaching by her lecturers made it unnecessarily stressful.

> *I got three lecturers for one subject, and they don't communicate very well. … It's because they bring their own materials, and some of them don't use the slides, some of them use the slides, and they don't inform us for that. And I can see in … the different way they like teaching … like some of them exactly following the materials they giving, and some of them not. And just writing on the board. I think it's kind of difficult. I don't have any structures.*

Alice was also critical of the amount of material crammed into each lecture, saying her lecturers tended to jump chapters to cover all of a subject's content.

> *I am doing a second language and also it's like, for the finance, you can't like just jump. I just feel he is just jumping the chapters. And like, one of my feelings is like, sort of lectures we got like 50 slides to do, it won't be efficient. Like it's impossible for you to do the 50 slides like during maybe two hours. It's hard. And you won't be able to explain clearly.*

*But when we ask for this, they just saying 'this is basical' (*basic*). Normally the feedbacks (*from the lecturers*) 'we expect you to know this. We don't have time to explain this.'*

She spoke of her frustration at being expected to respond to questions in class, but not having time to process information delivered in the same teaching block.

Because they don't have tutorial time, but they still like tutoring some questions within the class. But after 50 slides straight away to get into the questions, we don't even have time to read anything. How can we like get an understand of that?

4.6.3 Penny

Penny encountered a major issue in her final semester of her undergraduate degree when she failed an exam and therefore failed the subject. Confident she had completed all the requirements for her degree at Macquarie University, she returned to China to visit her family. She was shocked when she found she hadn't passed the language-intensive *Revenue Law*. With no alternative but to repeat the subject, her graduation was delayed by a semester, putting pressure on her deadline to apply for PR.

*Before I come (*went*) back China I think I can get complete my degree, but when … I see my final results.... Oh my God!. … I don't think I can failed this exam. I think my final exam is very good, so I come* (went) *back* (to China).

She tried to apply for a review and because she was out of the country asked another student to appeal on her behalf. However she found her lecturer not willing to accommodate the request.

I asked S (another Chinese student*) to help me* (ask for a review*) but my teacher decided no, because she* (S) *is not law student,* (so) *she cannot. So ok, I repeat that* (subject).

Penny said that she got little in the way of support from the two universities she attended, although she accepted that assistance was available. However she said she was an independent learner who preferred to work on her own.

> *I just go to the lecture, tutorial, and the study at home and then exam, to discuss with my friends ... I know this idea* (discussion groups) *but I don't want to find this programs to help me, I know this idea, all the things I can choose, can settle by myself.*

4.6.4 James

James found a network of resources when he started his undergraduate degree.

> *Griffith was an international student focussed university I think and we got English help program and also we have I think free English section to help us to improve our language. And also we have library section to help us to do research and how to write an argument or something like that. It was really helpful when we actually transit from the non-academic study into higher education study.*

James said the language help he got in his undergraduate degree really helped him.

> *Well when I first start, I found I was really struggling with my academic writing and did not really understand what research is about. So my first year subjects I have to do research and write on different topics and we have academic working shops and lots of research working shops and that's very helpful I think. And for the writings, to be honest, my grammar was really bad, so we usually lose lots of points on the grammar and Griffith also offer writing review help. You can book it. Academic Writing, they review all your papers, they tell you, 'what's this'. Mostly tell you the structure and the grammar, not telling you the context. But I think that's really helpful ... And, ah, lots of things I think from the library and they also have the resume writing workshops and stuff like that, research, most things.*

He said he found academics willing to adjust the pace of their lectures to meet the needs of international students.

> *You can always ask the lecturer to repeat that and the lecturer will always keen to help. They always say 'if you don't understand what I say just raise your hand' and they are aware there are a lot of international students out there so they say 'if I'm going too fast raise your hand to tell me to slow it down or to explain in more detail'. And most of what we did is if we don't quite clearly get the concept we just highlight them and ask the lecturer afterwards. ... They will explain in more details for us. They really help a lot*.

James described his experience at Griffith University on the Gold Coast as outstanding.

> *I think for my undergraduate, it was fabulous. I love it. .. love my teaching staff, I love the help from the uni, and, ah really learned everything. I knew nothing about Australia but now I know a lot. I know the law sitting, how the law works, how the political thing runs and how everyday working day life is related with the economy and stuff like that.*

However he was dissatisfied with his postgraduate studies at Griffith's Nathan campus, saying it was not challenging, rehashed content from his undergraduate degree and didn't prepare him for employment.

> *I'm a little bit disappointed because I got a couple of friends who have studied at different university and we have compared what we have learned. I feel like the master degree coursework is more … another diploma and ah, doesn't really get extend to it like a real postgraduate degree, you still learn the same thing as the … undergraduate degree.*

He was also disappointed that after adjusting to an Australian way of teaching and learning, he found most of his postgraduate lecturers were from China.

Most of my lecturer are from the same background as me, all from Chinese ... Ah, for the three years of my undergraduate I really get used to the way Australian teachers teach. … Australian teachers … give you a problem, they don't tell you the answer, they tell you how to define the problem and how to work step by step to find the answer. … That's the most thing I gained from my experience, from my education in Australia. In China, all the Chinese they all like 'what is going to be on the exam, study that, memory that.'

He said most of his Chinese lecturers at Nathan used a Chinese teaching approach which focussed on exam preparation but didn't explain key concepts.

*They are going to focus on the exam material, they don't go into the beyond. For example my undergraduate economics lecturer, they really related to today's issue like the GFC (*global financial crisis*) and the political stuff. They really analysed how this is going to impact our day to day life … for example whether the minimum wage is going to help unemployment rates, or something like that. But in my post-grad my Chinese lecturer, the stock option for example, they don't really relate it to how the GFC affects the stock or your options trading. They just give you the formulas and you just put the number into them, they didn't really give you the meaning of the formula.*

He believed shortcomings in his master's degree affected his career.

Because I have also applied couple of finance jobs and (in) *my interview, I couldn't really answer them because I need trading experience. I don't really know how to analyse the share, whether it's good or bad. Even for some basic exam models, we didn't do any for my post-graduate. Very disappointing.* (My friends at other universities) *they have a whole subject, they have to simulation trading, they have to pick up a couple of shares, they have to analyse and they see the results.*

4.6.5 Daisy

Daisy felt she got adequate support during her studies saying that while her university wasn't proactive in offering help, she knew it was available.

> *If I am learning and I don't know* (something), *I ... will ask my tutor. So they are really helpful so I don't think there are a lot of problems*. … *But if you got problems, you can contact them. They will provide you if you got questions. … When I started at university, when I got problems, I always go to the consultation and ask them actions. They are helpful and they like to talk to you and solve your problems. But if you don't contact them, they won't contact you. There's a lot of students. How can they manage?*

Despite some criticisms about the content of her course, for Daisy the overwhelming benefit of her Australian education was the style of learning that challenged students to become independent learners.

> *When you come to Australia ... you will find the education system is really different. Now (*studying in Australia*) is more focussed on … self-study. In China, it is focussed on the teacher. As long as you got a good teacher, you can learn a lot from the teachers. But here you only have less than 20 hours a week for studying at university and all the times you have to organise by yourself. It's all the time like a test for yourself.*

DISCUSSION

Quality of teaching was given by international students at universities in Australia as a significant consideration that influenced their study destination (AEI, 2012) as it was for students in this study. Yet their experiences at Australian universities were not uniformly positive. Most spoke highly about the level and quality of academic language support available through the specialist ALL advisers, and Crystal in particular found their personal approach reassuring. James also spoke highly of the support he received in his undergraduate degree, particularly with academic writing

and research from both the ALL and library advisers and from his lecturers, but negatively about his postgraduate experience. For both Penny and Daisy, although help wasn't proactively offered, it was available if and when they needed it. Alice was satisfied with her undergraduate experience, but highly critical of the level of academic support she received in her postgraduate studies.

The students had mixed views when it came to their institutions, and the type of support they were offered. Crystal for example tended to review her universities mainly in terms of the facilities they provided. She was critical of the Holmes Institute's location in a high rise building, and described the University of New South Wales as ideal because of its language support, employment workshops and social activities. Alice on the other hand evaluated the Holmes Institute positively in terms of its teaching, saying the classes were smaller and she received more academic help. She criticised the large classes and restricted access to her lecturers at the University of New South Wales and expressed a view there were too few academics for the number of students enrolled, a position supported in the literature. Coates et al. (2009) provided data to show teaching staff numbers had failed to keep pace with growth in student enrolments, with student/staff ratios increasing from 14 to 22 students per teacher. The University of Melbourne (2011) argued that diminished government funding caused its student/staff ratios to increase by more than 50% in the past 20 years, leading to a reduction in student/staff contact which in turn diminishes students' chances of reaching their full academic potential. The Group of Eight universities (Gof8, 2011) in comparing Australian and American universities, found an 'alarming gap' (p.10) between student and staff interactions, an indicator closely linked to availability and thus number of, academic teaching staff.

Alice said she couldn't cope with the amount of material crammed into lectures, and her teachers' unwillingness to explain material because of time constraints. She also found it difficult to process

information and answer questions within the lecture. This is not surprising. At the time, Alice would have been operating at an IELTS level between 5.5 and 6.5 (her pre and post study scores) At that level, she would still have been translating back and forth between Chinese and English (Hogan, as cited in Birrell, 2006), making participation in tutorial groups difficult. Certainly she would have had little time to process concepts and respond meaningfully. It appears either the curricula were too dense to allow Alice's lecturers time to cover the materials thoroughly, or they lacked the teaching skills to cater to diverse needs of students in the class. It is possible too that James's lecturers were not experienced in teaching NESB students. Although he said they encouraged students to raise their hands or ask the academics to slow down or clarify information they didn't understand, many overseas students (and domestic ones) would be daunted by interrupting a lecture to acknowledge they weren't keeping up.

Another concern of two students was that there was considerable duplication of undergraduate course material in their master's degrees. For Penny this was beneficial, allowing her to gain her degree quickly in time to gain critical migration points. For James, it was not; he felt his master's degree lacked the content necessary to develop his knowledge and for him get a job. He was also disappointed to find himself being taught by Chinese lecturers, who focused on exam preparation rather than problem solving. (The difficulty of recruiting local *Accountancy* academics is addressed in Chapter 6.)

Bexley, Arkoudis, and James (2012) report that the academic profession is more differentiated than is acknowledged, and many academic roles are more diverse than many academics themselves appreciate. This is born out in the experience of the students, who reported not only a significant variation across institutions in the services they offer, but also in the teaching approach of individual academics. This is a focus of the remaining chapters, but particularly Chapters 6 and 7.

4.7 OBSERVATIONS OF OTHER CHINESE STUDENTS

Some of the students' comments in this section are hearsay, in that they are commenting on what they've heard, rather than their own direct experience. For the most part however, the case study respondents have discussed their own interactions with other international students. All of the case study interviewees had first-hand experience of Chinese students using irregular means to pass assessment. Some of the interviewees' responses indicate that they feel their compatriots should work harder, or endeavour to adjust to the education system in Australia. Some felt problems arise when international students are not sufficiently challenged.

4.7.1 Crystal

Crystal said a lot of Chinese students struggled because they didn't work hard enough.

> *I … have a lot of friends and they have difficulty in study. For example, they study four subjects and they fail two each semester. ... I think they have not enough preparation before exam. They just treat exam like very easy one but exam is not.*

Although Crystal rejected any suggestion that she deferred exams (although she later said she had deferred her first CPA examination), or asked other students to complete work for her, she claimed that other Chinese students commonly do this to space their exams.

> *I think some students they don't want to do all the exam at the same day. They want defer and they provide the medical certificate. I don't like lasting that time too longer (*extending the exam period*), and you will feel lonely because other students finish exam and you still need to revise and waiting until that day to do it. And usually a deferred exam is harder than original exam.*

Crystal said she knew of cases where students asked others to complete papers or online tests for them, with the authors guaranteeing that the deception wouldn't be discovered.

They charge the price and it's guaranteed you can't be found. Not someone's paper (using another student's paper) *is very common. It takes ... more than two hundred dollar per thousand (*words*). Yeah, that's common. …* (They also complete) *online test. Macquarie University, they some subjects they have an online quiz every week. It's 5% of the whole subject every week so they will give their ID and their password to another person who is ...* (a) *student who already graduated from this subject and have very good results … they will help the student do it and get the 5%. They … said it like 100%, if 20 multiple choice, I guarantee 15 of that is correct* (a 100% guarantee that 15 out of 20 questions are correct).

Referring to the influence of Chinese families in education choices, she made a distinction between genuine international students, and those she described as being in Australia to satisfy their parents.

Most (of these) *students bad..... They purpose is not study here. They are just being here. Their purpose is give parents the '*I was in Australia and I study there'. *When they finish they just go back.*

4.7.2 Alice

Alice also acknowledged that many of her friends had problems, even to the extent of choosing universities which had a reputation for being 'easier'.

It's becoming reasons or the factors they choosing university. They choosing the only (one) *they go into. This college or this university, ah, easier. ... They say, 'oh, now this university is easy to pass under this measure.'*

She also felt that one reason her Chinese friends struggled, was because they progressed through their degrees without having mastered the previous year's material (although they had passed assessment).

It's getting harder from year one to year three. The year three is the hardest one. The subjects is more academic and text books are not that easy to read … so if you don't do well before (in previous years)*, you don't have a good foundation to get into the much more academic level. It's much more difficult.*

Alice said she also had been asked to accept payment for writing assignments for others.

Yes, it does happen. I know that it happens. Some people ask me to do the assignment for them, and they paying for me. I won't do that because I can't like … I don't want their money. Like, you have to do something by yourself.

She recounted a story about how a friend had been failed for giving his paper to another student.

*My friend, he told me 'I failed'. … His special friend used his assignment and not even changing anything to submit it and the result came out with 100% match and the lecturer was looking for which one was 100% match (*on anti-plagiarism software*) and it came back to him, and (the lecturer) say, "I can't pass you. It's unacceptable'.*

Despite arguing that students needed to manage their own studies, Alice volunteered that she had, albeit reluctantly, helped her boyfriend cheat by completing online quizzes that formed part of his assessment.

My boyfriend. … he's always asking my help. … I did it for him, because sometimes, he can't really get into the topic. He needs my help. 'Can you explain to me in Chinese' or something like that? I don't like to do that because I think if you taking this course you should be able to understand at least the topic.

She'd also had experience of students deferring exams as a way of scheduling tests, but said it was a waste of time because students still would not study for them.

I talk to some of them like, 'what is the difference to do an exam later, you not going to study'. For this kind of student, actually, even they don't do the exam right now, or the assessment right now, but pushing like ten days or even give like a month to do, the reason doesn't change a lot. Not really. They just not want to do so many thing during the same time.

Alice felt that a major reason when Chinese students did badly at university is that they hadn't transitioned to a new way of education, relying instead on the Chinese style they were exposed to at school.

I think there's a lot of effect from the previous educations. The way they study, a lot of student they still cannot change. … Even if they don't know, they don't ask (their lecturers). *..They just rather to ask their classmates … In China, it's like... the teachers, you can't really talk to them, like in casually or like communication, like our sitting face to face talking. Never.*

Alice described this way of learning as very Chinese, in that it provides the right answers, but with no real understanding of the topic.

Yeah, and it's so crazy. I can't do that way. I never do well in Chinese education and that study. It's too much. You can't memorise. Also the memorise does nothing for you – nothing. Yeah, doesn't does nothing. It's like you memorise this topic and the right answer is, you don't know why, just why. I can't. I never do.

4.7.3 Penny

Penny acknowledged that she found parts of her studies difficult, but was adamant that she did not ask for any assistance which, in an academic environment, would be deemed unethical.

If I write some assignment I need to discuss with my friend, so any idea I need to write I discuss.

However, like the other participants in the study, she acknowledged that some international students used dishonest means to get through exams.

I don't know (how often students ask others to write their assignments) *but I see some people use another people to write their assignment.*

She also said that students who ask others to complete online tests for them invariably don't study hard, and even by cheating, they still could not pass their subjects.

I don't know (if it happens much), *but I think if you* (some students) *want to pass you* (they) *need to do that because some Macquarie students think the Macquarie course is very difficult. But I think it's easy not to work hard for this course. If they use someone to help them to write the homework* (*they*) *cannot pass.*

She agreed some students deferred exams to improve their chances of passing the assessment, particularly when tests were scheduled closely.

I think sometimes in Macquarie the exam time is very close. Sometimes cannot prepare exam so one might do that (postpone exams)*. … I think if I do supplementary test it more harder*. (Laughs and asks rhetorically) *Why I choose a harder one*?

4.7.4 James

James was quite candid in discussing how students manage assessment, recounting the extreme measures some took.

I never do any deferred exam because our lecturer always said defer is not that easy but I do have lots of students trying to get defer exam from all the means by necessary. It was

really quite impressive sometimes. They put all the energy on trying to get defer exam rather than just study for them. … Lots of my friends try to fake it to get doctor notes ... One of the Aussie students trying to get deferred exam, she actually ate a raw potato to vomit in the exam so they can actually ask her to leave. They said 'don't worry we'll just give you a deferred exam. You can have a rest at the moment'. It's just unbelievable the way they try to get a defer.

He said although his Chinese friends used deferral as a way of scheduling exams, it tended not to make a difference.

Especially when they have a little bit harder course, so they try to do the hardest one two months later so they have more time to review them. But to be honest they didn't really review that much within that two month period.

James said that he'd experienced situations where Chinese students had asked him for help, and although he resisted, he'd felt cultural pressure to agree.

Most of the international students they form their own society so just out of courtesy sometimes it is hard to say no when someone ask you to help them to do their assessment. Ah, sometimes the student … ask you what they don't know – they want you to teach them – to help them. That's okay for us, we're keen to help other people.

He said on occasion, he had been asked to give his assignments to other students.

They just ask you in private 'I want your assignment so that I can copy it' so they didn't really get the idea of academic plagiarism or how serious an issue it is in Australia. I didn't really give them, I just said if you want my help you can ask me what you don't know. I can help you with that, but I couldn't really give you all my assignments because I don't want academic fail.

James acknowledged that sometimes students walked a fine line between asking for help, and plagiarism.

> *Ah, it depends how you define help, you know. If you just got a problem like you don't know how to express your opinion or something, or you ask them to correct your grammar or check your paper, that would be alright but if you ask other people actually DO your assignment, that would be like plagiarism in a different form.*

In discussing degree choice among Chinese students, James agreed that Chinese students choose Accounting to avoid writing assignments.

> *Quite a lot of my fellow students decide to do Accounting because of that. Quite a number of students actually change their degree into Accounting because they fear to write assignments. … Most of the time* (in Accounting) *we only have to do our exam like multiple choice or short answer but also sometimes we do have assignments ... but not research focussed it was more like a case study or … analysis. … Before I decide to do Accounting I didn't really know about all the assessment for that subject but actually* (when) *I went to Uni to study there I feel really lucky because my poor writing skills. … I don't have to write. Well, three years of my undergraduate study I only write two assignments, so it was a considerable factor for us to study that.*

(Addressing assessment for Accountancy was also raised by a head of a business school, and will be discussed further in Chapter 6).

4.7.5 Daisy

Daisy also said it was common for Chinese students to choose subjects specifically to avoid having to write assignments.

I know a lot of friends, classmates and they just choose mathematics and some subjects that don't require to write notes or essays like that. I know that. Most people do that because they felt it is easier to get a degree.

Although she didn't see it happening widely, Daisy said she was aware that plagiarism occurred.

I see some people who ask others to write their assignments for them, but not much. ... No, in my degree, not too much.

Daisy acknowledged that she provided assistance to Chinese students while rejecting any suggestion that she wrote their papers.

Because while I study at university, some people they don't understand the concept and because we are from China and happy to help them, sometimes I explain the items and the concept to them.

More significantly, she admitted that the assistance she provided sometimes extended to writing outlines for fellow Chinese students, demonstrating an inability to differentiate between 'help' and actually completing a part of another student's assessment.

Sometimes just do the outline because it's a kind of ability. Some people they can't organise the concept. They feel confused about everything. But for me it's not hard, so I have to help others.

DISCUSSION

The three key issues that emerged from this section all relate to Chinese students' efforts to secure degrees, including their choice of institution and study program, cheating and plagiarism, and how their previous experience affects their studies in Australia.

Birrell and Healy (2008) propose that *Accounting* is arguably one of the least demanding courses at tertiary level and some international students appear to think similarly. James said some students choose *Accounting* because they have weak writing skills and believe they won't have to write assignments. This was certainly his experience; in his three years as an undergraduate James only had to write two essays. Daisy said there was a perception that Maths and similar subjects which didn't require essay writing made it easier to get a degree, and her friends and classmates chose subjects on that basis.

While this type of assessment seems to help students pass their courses, the question must be asked. How well are universities preparing students for professional employment, if they do not set assessment tasks to test this critical macro-skill? Birrell (2006) cites Immigration data showing 45% of Chinese Accounting graduates granted PR in 2006-2007 had not achieved an IELTS 6.0, even though Accounting graduates are unlikely to find professional employment without an IELTS 7.0.

Academic writing is central to a student's success, both in higher education (Arkoudis & Tran, 2010) and in employment. O'Loughlin and Arkoudis's (2009) investigation into IELTS exit scores of 63 students at a major Australian university compared their IELTS results pre and post-study and found *Writing* was the macro-skill where students demonstrated least improvement. Fewer than half the students in the study were able to improve their writing scores over the course of their degrees, while 10 students actually regressed. Not setting assessment tasks in a macro-skill that many NESB students find difficult, is not a formula for developing employable graduates.

Plagiarism and deferment of exams also emerged in the students' discussion of their Chinese colleagues. All of the students in the study said plagiarism takes place and all recounted stories of being approached to help other Chinese students with assessment. Two even acknowledged they had committed plagiarism, although they didn't seem aware that that was what they were

doing. Australian academics in Bretag's (2007) study identified plagiarism as a significant is issue and said institutions tended to treat domestic and international students differently when plagiarism was alleged. Academic cheating is an issue that emerged quite strongly in the interviews with the academic language advisers and the content academics in this study, and will be discussed in more detail in later chapters. Deferment of exams, another issue raised by the discipline academics, will also be addressed in Chapter 6.

The final theme that emerged in this section was the influence of their former education experience on some Chinese students. Until relatively recently, Chinese students have been characterised as passive learners who prefer to receive information in teacher-directed and teacher-dominated classes, and who memorise by rote (Briguglio & Smith, 2012). However this characterisation has been challenged by researchers including Chalmers and Volet (1997) who argue that stereotypes that portray South-East Asian students as unprepared for studying at university are not correct. Yet this certainly is the perception of one student in the study who described some of her Chinese classmates as unable to transition to a Western learning style.

Generally, the students in the study were quite critical of the attitudes of some Chinese students, saying they put too little effort into their studies, choosing easy study options, and looking for too much assistance. Yet this criticism doesn't allow for the significant adjustment issues many international students have in settling in to tertiary study. Burns (1991) says studies of students from South East Asia find that they are not dissimilar to Australian students in that both groups are answer oriented and cram. However the literature does find that East Asian students face additional problems because of their unsophisticated study methods, augmented by inadequate English skills. Ramsay, Barker and James's (1999) study of academic adjustment (the 'fit' which students achieve with the academic context) and learning processes (how individuals acquire

knowledge and skill) highlighted the integral role of emotions in learning and adjustment and found the stress international students initially felt influenced their academic capacity.

Even though the expectations of parents or family continue to play a significant role in shaping domestic students' decisions to enrol in university study (James, Krause, & Jennings, 2010, p.2), international students experience far greater family pressure. Because Chinese parents tend to value education highly, and generally pay for their children's studies, the excessive loss of face that failure involves, leads to pressure to do well. The consequences of failing are quite different for an overseas student compared to a local student. The latter who fails can return to study sometime later or find alternative employment. Overseas students must return home and face the future as a failure. The consequent loss of face extends to the wider family who may have pooled resources to provide financial support (Burns, 1991, p.70). Crystal, and Alice to a lesser degree, expressed a sense of failure that they hadn't been able to secure permanent residence, although this was mitigated to a large degree by their academic success; returning to China with two degrees enabled them both to secure good jobs, which lessened any loss of face for themselves and their families.

4.8 Living, working and participating in Australian society

All of the students in the study had little contact with native English speakers during their studies. All except one said they tried to make contact with Australians with limited success. All saw it as important, although one student made no real attempt to meet Australians either socially, at work or at university. The others attempted some integration strategies, from trying to live among native English speakers, to choosing study options which put them in English speaking environments. All expressed disappointment that they were not able to achieve their goal of making Australian friends.

4.8.1 Crystal

When Crystal came to Australia as a 19 year old her initial contact with native speakers was negligible. She moved into home stay accommodation arranged by a Chinese education agent, expecting to be able to improve her English by living with a native English speaking family. Instead she found she had been placed with three other Chinese students in a house owned by a Chinese man from Guangdong (who spoke Cantonese not Crystal's native Putonghua). Crystal only stayed a month and when she was unable to find an English speaking household, moved into a shared house with ten other Chinese students before finally moving to another shared apartment with three Chinese friends from the foundation program in China. She described her exposure to English as very limited, until she took up an industry attachment at the Vibe Hotel, as part of her hospitality diploma.

> *My supervisor was Chinese people (*but*) because my manager is Nepal and my big supervisor is Philippine and the supervisor is Chinese and my workmates like have Nepal, India, Chinese and Aussie so we speak English during the break time.*

Crystal found her housekeeping job was too quiet, so transferred to the Menzies Hotel, to work in room service. Although English was the common language in her workplace, she found the level was not demanding.

> *My workmate are Philippines, Vietnamese, Germany, Aussie or only me Chinese people. (*I was the only Chinese person*). ... We don't speak too much. Like 'good morning', 'how are you', greeting. … or service language.*

When shifts at the hotel became sporadic, Crystal took a job in a drinks franchise owned by a Chinese man, working thirty hours a week over three days; she found the work conditions unacceptable after her Western experience.

I don't like to work for Chinese boss. They are not really care about their staff and of course the salary is not good as Western industry and also they have no wellbeing for staff.

Although she found she only needed basic English to work in housekeeping jobs, Crystal described her hospitality experience as very helpful for her communication development.

That's really helped me. That's helped me communication skills. It's quite totally different from what the lecture told me, like communication skills. Exactly I forgot everything what lecture told me but I found it during my work, I found it, 'oh, communication's like this, if you say this word, this sentence like this way like the receiver will feel better'. Yeah, that's what I found. It's not the text book taught me.

4.8.2 Alice

Alice also immersed herself in the Chinese community in her first six months in Australia. With little exposure to native English speakers, she lived first with other international students in a share house owned by a Chinese landlord, before moving six months later into an apartment with three Chinese friends. However she recognised the need to put herself in a situation where she would learn more English and develop her understanding of Australian culture and actively sought ways to achieve this. She decided to study hospitality.

In my term only seven of us, Chinese student. Others are speaking other languages. … I think we got people from 12 or 13 countries. ... I saw a lot of people from Western, Switzerland, German, everywhere. American even. Because that's one of the reasons I went there, I went to that school. Choose that major.

As a requirement of her Diploma Alice needed hospitality industry experience; she successfully applied to the Sheraton Hotel in Sydney.

*I have to do 1,000 (*hours*) for my course … I'm doing the food and beverage … conference, restaurants, bar club, even club. And the banquets … parties like cocktail parties, I'm like crossing around and even in-room dining, I give them some help. Because they employing me, they say 'casual food and beverage attendant', that's my titles.*

Working in the Sheraton Hotel gave Alice more opportunities to practise her English.

Every day (I spoke English) *... I was lucky because in that year, the hotel was running very well and we got a lot of shifts to do and like each week was kind of full time in that year, because we got a 9 months to do our industry training and like in average I got 35 (hours) every week, so like during the 35 hours you gotta speak English.*

Alice also met what she called her 'ABCs' – Australian Born Chinese - who further developed her language skills and importantly, her ability to communicate confidently.

I meet some like, ah, how Australians, like my friends, they are background probably is Asian but they grow up in here, so they speak very good English, and we were like going out, have dinner and like, always chatting on the phone. I think that's a part, a bigger part of my English improvement. And I think that way you think comfortable to speaking English to peoples, like to customers, like everyone like.

The hotel experience coupled with the lessons learned from her Australian/Chinese friends gave Alice a better understanding of Australian cultural norms in the workplace.

It's kind of huge difference with the food style and even the dining style and the way you talking to your customers. It's more in Western style. It's much more casual. You don't need to, oh, like in China you have to be really ... I don't know ... you can't talk to your customers like friends. You have to polite and more professional. But here, it's like the

people (who) *stay in the hotel or in the restaurant, they're kind of relaxed and they are nice.*

Alice felt that one of the most significant benefits she received from living in Australia is the independence she developed.

The best things like for me is like I can do everything by myself and I can do (make) *the decision … because if I stayed in China with my family … decisions made by them already. My steps, my plans, already set up by them. I don't need to worry about it and even the eatings, wash, like house-working, everything. You don't need to worry about it. But here, you do everything by yourself. It's very good experience for the youngs (*young people) *like ours to start communication with a society. It's really important, because of group of my friends … we couldn't even cook, even the boil the water.*

Despite coming to Australia because her parents felt discrimination here was not an issue, Alice said she faced it when trying to get a job in the hospitality industry.

*I feel it is a difference because of the nationality. Probably because of the language, like, who speak English as a mother tongue, but secondly probably some people have some discrimination. Probably. I'm not sure. But you can feel the difference. … Because I was working for the hotel, for my Diploma, and I'm doing the hospitality management and I'm getting to the Sheraton for two years, but actually once … the improvement opportunities (*promotions*) come out … they don't really like accept you. Probably the language problem or the visa problem, I don't know, but they didn't actually tell me why I didn't pass the interview*.

Alice felt that knowing both Mandarin and English should have made her a valued employee of the hotel, but believed that management positions only went to Westerners.

> *It's like, yeah, they will keep this type of staff (*like Alice*) just on the ground floor* (lower level positions)*, not getting to management … That's what I think from my research or my experience. Like my hotel, Sheraton or Four Seasons, the management is all Kiwis ... New Zealanders or Australians … or probably come some European countries. That's how they construct the system.*

4.8.3 Penny

Since she first stepped off the plane in Sydney in 2007, Penny has lived a very Chinese life. She lived with other Chinese students, mixed exclusively with Chinese students at university, rented accommodation from Chinese landlords and has worked exclusively for Chinese employers. Apart from incidental exposure, her only real engagement with local people has been in her current job, where she negotiates with universities on behalf of her Chinese employer, and some English Bible lessons she is taking, after being recruited by a religious sect.

When Penny first arrived in Australia in 2007 she immediately moved into shared accommodation with other Chinese students, moving after six months into an apartment which she rented with Chinese friends from Aoji. She found living in Australia very expensive, and to help with her living costs was employed by a Chinese man to sell furniture from her apartment.

> *In the first three year I just work at home because my boss just put some furniture in my garage … someone can call me and I just sell the furniture at home. I can get some commission.*

During her undergraduate degree Penny found another job, again with a Chinese employer, an agent who places Chinese students in schools and universities. Penny worked in this company for up to twenty-five hours a week while she studied (more than the 20 hours a week permitted under her visa conditions). This was in effect the first time Penny was required to use her English

language skills. Although she spoke primarily with her company's Chinese clients, she also had to contact universities on their behalf.

> *I contact many universities (*although*) my students always Chinese.*

Reflecting on her time in Australia, Penny described an environment where she found it difficult to make local friends or contacts.

> *I cannot get near them (Australians). I think … Chinese is good, Australia are not good*.

She developed no native speaking contacts until she was approached in the street by Jehovah's Witnesses who asked if she wanted to study religion. She accepted and members of the church come to her home weekly for religious study.

> *I just walking on the road, they find me. "Do you want to study the Bible?" … So I have some Western people friends but not very large, just a few. … They are older than me. … And they are teaching me the Bible in my home one* (once a) *week so I can speak English to them. It's helpful* (for my English) *because one week I need to do two hours of Bible study. So that is good.*

Despite her almost negligible attempts to integrate, Penny said she liked living in Australia, particularly because of what she saw as the openness of Australian people and communication (although like the students in Briguglio and Smith's (2012) study, it is hard to understand how she was able to form that impression, given her limited contact with Australians).

> *In Australia the people is more simple (*direct*). If you come (*go*) back Chinese idea is very … confused (*not straightforward*). … Life in Australia, you just tell me directly (*say what you think*) but in China you cannot.*

Despite the shock of moving to a quiet (by Chinese standards) city, and the rather solitary life she has lived since arriving in Australia, Penny describes it as suitable for her.

> *If I stay in China my parents, even though I am very independent, my parents always stay with me so sometimes they can help me. And in China have many friends. I can to play with them. But in Australia the first thing I get is very boring in here. After five o'clock any shop is closed so I can just stay in my home. … but because I am very quiet girl it doesn't matter for me.*

For a girl who professes independence, in all three interviews Penny raised the question of marriage, saying on all occasions that she needed to find a Chinese boyfriend.

> *My boss ask me today, 'you want to stay or come (*go*) back?' I told her if I get some (*a Chinese boyfriend*) from Australia and she (*he*) want to stay in here, maybe I will stay. If after three years I cannot find a suitable person and marry him I will come (go) back. Otherwise I will stay in Australia by myself but (*because I would be*) very lonely I (*would*) need to come* (go) *back.*

She discounted the notion of marrying an Australian man, because her parents wouldn't be able to converse with her husband.

> *I think* (I will marry) *Chinese … my mother said if you find Australia people (*an Australian man) *how I can to communication with them?*

She returned to the topic in the third interview, saying she wasn't sure whether she would apply for Australian citizenship after she became eligible in 2015, and that it would all depend on a yet to be found boyfriend.

Maybe, because I need to find one boyfriend and to discuss which country is better for us. If he think is better for China, I will come (go) *back. If we both want to stay in Australia, we will stay.*

4.8.4 James

When James came to Australia as an 18 year old he moved into accommodation with a home stay family on the Gold Coast, wrongly believing that he would be living with an Australian family.

They (the family) *come from Philippines … The home stay wife was come from Philippines and the home stay father was never be home. He got business.*

Apart from the teachers in his 10 week English language program, he met no native English speakers and even after being in Australia for two years had few Australian friends.

I do have a lot of foreign friends but not many Australian friends. We didn't really share much common interest you know? And we didn't really talk much during the lecture. And ah, the interesting thing is, last semester I got one class, no student was come from China. But all my lecturers and tutors come from China. (Laughs) *… It was bizarre you know. Unbelievable*.

After six months with his home stay family, James relocated to a house he shared with other international students from different countries who used English as a common language.

*We got two or three Chinese students ... and ah a couple from Thailand and one from Hong Kong. With Chinese people, of course (*we communicated*) in Chinese, but with other people we speak English. It really helped (*my English*) a lot because we are all really dreadful with English at that time and so we tend (*tried*) to understand each other. We try to help each other a little bit.*

He held a part-time job in a Chinese restaurant until his second year of university, when he started looking for a job that reflected his developing accountancy skills. Instead the only job he could find was as a mobile phone salesman, which he subsequently said gave him confidence to apply for PR. James adapted quickly to the Australian lifestyle, quickly feeling out of step with his Chinese friends when he returned for a holiday after his first year of study.

> *We do really feel Australian when we in China … We feel Australia sometimes … because we ah, we have been in totally different culture so we feel think different, little bit different. … The first time I went back home for three months, I just felt 'oh my God, when's the holiday over?'* (When) *you share different views with all your friends these days* (now) *… It was like, 'oh my God what the hell you talking about' ...* (both laugh).... *You know, after you been out you trying to do other things by yourself so you tend to grow up a little. You are different.*

4.8.5 Daisy

Daisy experienced a range of feelings when she first came to Australia. Firstly, she was surprised by what she saw as Sydney's lack of sophistication.

> (Giggling). *It's quite different from China. In China you can see high building everywhere, but here the house is really old. Most of them old. And I thought, 'it's not looks good'.*

She moved into accommodation owned by a Chinese landlord which she shared by five other Chinese students. She found the accommodation sub-standard and felt lonely and isolated.

> *My immigration agent, they find a place for me and it's really bad and I can hear others talking in other rooms. You know, the quality's really bad and when I first came here I thought … I went back to* (it was like) *southern 20 years ago in China. …. The problem is that I felt very lonely when I first came to Australia because everybody in the room, they*

just stay in their room and they don't speak to others. … Some international students, they come to Australia. They don't do a lot of social life. They just do the computer, play computer games or chatting with their friends or watching drama or movies, but their only life is computer ... computer and school.

After a month Daisy moved into a unit with a friend from her foundation program in China.

Linda (had) *come to Australia ... and she want to live with me so we moved shared a unit, just the two of us, because we are friend before, and if we live together we can help out each other and support each other.*

Daisy said she had expected to make local friends, but found it was not possible.

It's not good but what you can say? Because the culture is different. You know, the Australia people … the way they relax is in bar. They like making friends in bar. Just have a beer and chatting. … The life experiences quite different. Even though you chat with them, it's like very, how to say, it's like very general chat. You can't be friends unless you have like similar experience. It's really hard. You can talk to them, the weather or this this this, but you can't share your secrets and your feeling. You know because you're in different position. They can't understand you and you can't understand them. It's really hard.

Recognising that she would need association with English speakers to develop her own language skills, Daisy took a part-time job for around four months.

Actually I do that not because of payment, just because I want to practise my English and know more about other people and people just encourage each other and you go out and to the office and shops and just do sales. It's like business to business sales, and you just go to, you just have business every day. You go to the office and there's a group and people just encourage each other.

She said her work colleagues were from many different countries, but the common language was English.

> *Most of them, it's from all places. Maybe Europe, French – I meet French – and some people from England and some from India, China, Malaysia, you know, lots of people.*

This was Daisy's only experience of being employed since arriving in Australia. After she finished her degree, she took a long holiday in China, with the expectation that she would find a good job when she returned to Australia. However, to her surprise, she could not find employment.

> *When I went* (came) *back I tried to find a job and it was really hard. … Maybe my English is not good enough and in finance you know, people they want good English speaking. And another I think, the most important thing is, is I'm not PR or citizen. Because I got some friends and they got PR and they can find job easier than me.*

Unable to find a job, and not confident that a postgraduate degree would improve her employment prospects, Daisy investigated the option of starting her own business.

> *So I discussed it with my parents and my boyfriend and we decided to start our business and my first, at the beginning, I want to start a coffee shop because just I like the style … but it's when I tried to find a good business I learnt a lot during the process. First I need to buy a good business not a cheap business, you know, and secondly, people are not honest in the business, they always lie. You can't rely on anyone. You just the only thing you can rely is your eye.*

Daisy rejected the first business she investigated, a takeaway food shop, because she found the owner had misrepresented its financial state. At the time of her second interview, she was in the process of buying a newsagency, which she saw as a good business and also as an opportunity to meet local people and to learn more about the finance industry.

The one benefit is it's stable and the second thing is we can read news, the newspapers and we can have more opportunities to speak to locals. ... If I got my PR I really want to go out and find a finance job and during this time if I work and start a newsagency business I got more time to read news about finance and I think it's good for me.

Ultimately Daisy decided against the newsagency, leasing a Coffee Club franchise in Sydney, which at the time of our last contact in January, 2014 she was running successfully with her husband.

Daisy said the most significant outcome for her over the period she has spent in Australia has been exposure to new ideas and a different culture, which in turn has opened her mind to new experiences.

The culture is most important for me and it changed my mind a lot. Previously when I in China I think degree is important, but when I came here, I saw lot of people ... they don't care about degree. They think the experience is important. Not like working experience, life experience. Like social, social life is also important, so I think I think when I go (come) *here I open the mind and the mind changed a lot. It's ... helped me a lot in the future life.*

She rejected outright the view of one student in the study, that Chinese students see Chinese culture as superior, describing it instead as introspective. Like Penny, she saw the openness of Australian society as a distinct advantage.

It's linked to the world and the Chinese is like, really conservative, and they only focus on themselves. Whereas in Australia … you have the chance to learn. … It is good for people. It is good for people to develop themselves and you got more chance to connect with more advanced knowledge, more advanced technique. I think it's better. It's good.

DISCUSSION

As Burns (1991) points out, overseas students bring to Australia a very different cultural, social and intellectual experience from that which awaits them. This wasn't daunting for the students in this study; the likelihood of encountering a new culture was one of the *pull* factors that brought them to Australia. However after around seven years here, they still feel somewhat isolated from Australian society. Penny is the only student in the study who has made no real attempt to integrate. She lives with Chinese students, works for an Australian Chinese company, mixes almost exclusively with Chinese friends, and anticipates marrying a Chinese man. This wasn't the experience of the others. James thought living in an Australian homestay would help him assimilate, but found instead his English was better than that of his Asian homestay parents. Alice and Crystal took proactive steps to assimilate, enrolling in Hospitality studies to try to engage with Australian people. Daisy took a job, not for salary, but to broaden her contacts. Alice was the only student in the study who made local friends; although Chinese, they were born in Australia. Apart from these contacts, none of the others were particularly successful in meeting locals, and all but Penny expressed regret that they hadn't been able to integrate more.

Fildes, Cunnington, and Quaglio (2010) rightly point out that assimilation can be made easier by participation in extracurricular activities but for international students who often combine a heavy academic workload with part-time work, time is a constraint. Bexley, Daroesman, Arkoudis and James's (2013) survey of student finances found on average international students worked between 11 and 17 hours per week, and as Burns (1991, p.62) identified, 'many studies have found the overseas student totally immersed in academic activity with no time to relax.' More than a third of the respondents in Burns' survey identified issues such as loneliness, wanting Australian friends, and better mix in tutorial groups and in social events as impacting on their stay in Australia.

Chinese students studying at a West Australian university found that Australians seem more relaxed and outgoing than Chinese (Briguglio & Smith, 2012), a view that was endorsed by some of the students in this study. Daisy in particular found local people friendly and willing to help her when she needed assistance. However this did not translate to more than casual contact, which was also the experience of the students in the Briguglio and Smith study; no one reported forming friendships with locals or having been to an Australian home or social event.

Despite not making local friends, all of the students said they liked the lifestyle and the freedom and independence that come with living in Australia. James went a little further. He said he had adapted so well that when he went back to China, he felt more Australian than Chinese, and had difficulty communicating with his former friends. This was a sentiment shared by Alice.

A concern from reading the students' account of moving to Australia is how little support they received on arrival. All worked through Chinese education agents, and most were placed in shared accommodation owned by Chinese landlords. Daisy's experience is particularly harrowing. Just 20 years old, she was placed in sub-standard accommodation with no support and little contact with others. Crystal's experience is not too different. It is a testament to the resilience of these students that they stayed and completed their studies.

4.9 STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND INTEGRATION

All of the participants in the study felt becoming part of the student community would lead to better outcomes, and that universities had a responsibility to help international students integrate. However they also saw it as individual students' responsibility and most criticised their compatriots' approach to their education. A consistent theme was that it was more than a language issue; in their view, international students could be immature and passive and their Chinese education so entrenched that they aren't able to fully involve themselves in their Western education.

4.9.1 Crystal

Crystal said her hospitality training had taught her to adjust to Western ways.

> *Once you come to this society, you should adapt ... Probably because I came here four and a half years, I have already have adapt. Inside I am Chinese but I know a lot of Western politeness, how to do it. Like, we should switched off mobile phone in the lecture time, right? At least to keep it to quiet. But Chinese students, they don't.*

Crystal felt universities should share responsibility for helping students break out of their cultural groups and observed that what she called the 'five-star' universities provided better learning environments for international students.

> *One thing I found, like … the student from five star university, got much better language skill than the private or the four stars university or three stars university. … We got eight university group* (Group of 8) *… I found that student in that environment is much better than the student in Macquarie or the student in Holmes. Much better. I think they* (the G08 universities) *are most restrict* (strict) *on assignment, like you should do the group assignment, we should communicate, and also the study phenomenon, I think ... study phenomenon is when you enter to the library and you can find a lot of students study there. That's make me feel like I want to study, I want to read, I want to talk to them.*

Crystal also commented on the student composition at the 'five-star' universities, saying that diversity influenced the environment.

> *And the top university … not really had too much Chinese students. They also got other international students to come in. That's really influenced. And I also found my classmate had very good English skills ... They got very good communication.*

Crystal was of the view that having too many Chinese students in a university had a negative influence on their success, particularly in large lectures where they weren't required to contribute.

> *Macquarie got too much Chinese students. They are just concentrate on how to pass the exam. Because it's very hard, very very hard. … They* (Macquarie) *have a lot of Chinese students and they even don't need to speak English. Like a large lecture got more than 100 or 200 people … in one room. They don't need to speak English.* (Note: Two-thirds of Macquarie's student cohort are domestic students [AEN, n.d.]).

Crystal described a range of activities that the University of New South Wales provided to help international students. However she volunteered that many Chinese students did not know the benefits on offer.

> *They* (the University of New South Wales) *send me an email and I register to the career department ... the e-newsletter every month…* (But*) Chinese students probably doesn't know the benefits, what they can get, because their life is very personally (*introverted or isolated*). They don't like social with Western students and they don't care what website said. They don't care. Emails, the school send it to them, they don't read it. ... in April I apply for the career expo for the volunteer and they accepted me … and I ask my friends to come. I say, 'hey they got more than 130 employer to come, very famous company, why you don't to come to have a look what happened in your industry?' They say, 'whoa, where did you get this information?' I said, 'did you receive the email?' They say, 'no, I have never checked that email box which the school gave you.'*

Crystal criticised her fellow international students for being unwilling to take part in Western cultural activities.

I think the problem is with the Chinese students … Because they don't want to (participate). *… They feel lonely here and they want to find some friend close to them like also the Chinese friends as well, and they will have one feeling like, 'I hate every Western things around me. I don't want to read a Western newspaper. I don't want to see television program, I don't want to talk to Western people', and also, 'I hate this school, I hate the lectures, everything.' … I think it is the personality from Asian people. They think they are great but exactly (*actually*) they are not great, they are not great. … A lot of Chinese people, they think they are so great. Like, we got a lot of invention, our nation's got so much inventions, and Western people, you just immigration from, you know, they got this kind of thinking in their mind. … They always think, 'oh, Western people. I came here to study, I am the guest, you know, and why do I need to talk to you and who do I need to learn your culture. I don't need to learn your culture'. That's what they think. 'I got my culture, you got your culture'. … They not go* (out), *don't have social life. They came to Australia and they just study there. Just study. … All social life is, can go with Chinese person, Chinese friends, Chinese class-mate.*

4.9.2 Alice

Alice was quite critical about how universities responded to and supported international students, but couldn't articulate how universities could do more. Her only suggestion was that universities offer a foundation program of the kind she completed in China, which she found useful because it gave her insights into what to expect in Australia.

I think give them some course before the university, like foundation, like we did before, it really help. … I think it help a lot for me because I never had a experience of ... we do Accounting, IT, something, ah, even the Maths, through the English course. I never had an experience of them (studying subjects by English immersion). *… I think like from my experience… like, writings of the essays and the other assignments and the concepts of*

those ones are a basic idea to do something, and when you do more practice, you get better, better, better.

She agreed in part with Crystal's assessment of her fellow Chinese students, saying they lacked maturity, independence and basic skills for living.

It's unbelievable, like they even don't know how to cutting sort of things like cucumbers. Like, are you human like? It's just so silly because they never do it. They say to me, 'when I eat cucumber, the cucumber always been cut. I don't know how does they look when they a original colour.' (amazed*) They do, they really do!*

4.9.3 Penny

Apart from supporting mentoring programs, Penny's only suggestion to help make international students' education experience more rewarding was placing multicultural staff in student services areas.

I think the student service should find some Chinese staff to find the Chinese students and the Japanese staff to find the Japanese students.

This would be particularly helpful she said for some international students whose oral language skills were so inadequate, that they couldn't actually articulate their request for assistance; they can't get help, because they can't speak well enough to ask for help.

I help some students like this, they need to (get) *help, but their English is not very good. Even though* (they) *go to the student centre, they can not to explain it very well. So the problem cannot to settle* (be resolved) *… I think some Chinese students can reading the book but cannot speak.*

Penny acknowledged she would have done better in her studies and language development had she mixed with native English speakers, but she said she didn't feel it was academics' responsibility to manage this.

> *I think it is difficult for the university. Every year you are in one class, we almost* (always) *like to find Chinese classmates because it is easy to communicate. So I think the tutor is cannot to control for this.*

4.9.4 James

James's perspective on the issues being faced by international students differed, in that he believed part of the reason overseas students fail is not because their workload is too difficult, but because they are not challenged enough.

> *Study in Australia wasn't that hard as we imagined it … Even we study as a second language because the study load or work load was not that heavy. We only have to do 4 subjects a semester, that's like 12 hours a week for compulsory, so if you really paid attention and attend all your lectures and tutorial and do your homework afterward, you didn't even have to put any extra hours you can get a pass. … So some student because it's not hard they didn't really pay that much attention and they didn't work very hard so sometimes they fail because of that. … The only university I study was Griffith so I consider it was a little bit too easy because before the exam … most of the lecturer will tell you … not exactly what kind of question are going to be on the exam paper but they will highlight all the important things for you.*

He commented that although students can still manage a pass, many did not attend university regularly, either because of work commitments or loss of focus; one option was for universities to introduce compulsory attendance.

The one thing that cause me concern, I got lots of friends, they don't really attend to class and … they can still manage with a pass and I think university should really set up more regulations around the attending stuff, attendance, and ah, really look after the overseas students. Sometimes they … lose their focus and sometimes … they just don't want study anymore and sometimes they work too much and even we have the 20 hour limit per week working hours but , sometimes they do for the Chinese restaurants stuff like that, many more hours than that.

While arguing that students need to be self-directed (*The people who went to higher education has* (are) *… 20 years old ... should have their own control over their own life),* he nevertheless argued for more controls on student attendance.

For university higher education, they didn't check the attendance that closely and even they do check they really didn't report with the immigration. They just give you 5% for participation. So lots of the international students think 5% is not that much and they didn't attend. ...They still attend the first week of the semester and the last week of the semester because most time that's when the teacher will give you the hint for the exam. So that's pretty much what they are going to do. … I've actually got two friends who were kicked out of the country because they were not attending enough course and sometimes they couldn't pass. I actually got a friend who failed four subjects in one semester and the university just terminated his study. He didn't attend any of the lecture, he didn't do any of the homework, and he just pretty much just played around at the casino. ... He pretty much wasted his entire three years here.

James said although his university warned international students if their attendance was poor, it did little to change attendance behaviour.

Actually at Griffith got something called amber risk assessment. If you are not attending the first five weeks of the tutorial you will get a letter from the university but it's still not much.

He acknowledged universities walk a fine line when it came to imposing regulations on students but they needed to balance potential loss of students with maintaining their academic reputations.

*Well, ah, it may at their cost, if you control them too tough and might lose students, stop coming. But I think for the longer term , you know, you want to maintain the quality of your graduates you should done a better job of maintaining a certain level of attendance and make sure when they go out (*graduate*) they can do their job.*

Although he wasn't sure how it could be accomplished, James felt that universities should be doing more to help those students who aren't mature or responsible enough to manage their independence.

If they can do that, they would be great, you know. ... Our parents paid us for is to come here to study. They don't want to waste our time and working activity. So if the university can really control us to live in society and to study here, that would be great. But just I really can't see any practical ways they can do that, you know.

James acknowledged that Chinese students don't tend to mingle with local students, but said he didn't see that as a university responsibility. He agreed with Crystal's assessment of Chinese students' unwillingness to participate in university activities.

Well couldn't really blame the university. They have really good program. Ah, different interest group associations you can join, complete support and you can do lots of things, they host different parties every Friday. … I think Chinese people are really shy and they

*don't like to get involved in other cultures. So they, sometimes scary (*scared*) and sometimes you don't share the same interests. … For us, we love football, and we love soccer and basketball, and most Australian guys they into AFL or rugby so we don't really have much to talk about. And some they love party. And we have no idea what we do at parties.* (Both laugh) *...That's the thing, huh.*

He said mixing with English speakers was a key to developing language skills, but not to follow his friends' example.

I got a couple of friends, they may not doing well in their studies, but their language skills are magnificent. Because they actually got a couple of Aussie friends and they go party with them, just social with them, so this is the way you to learn really how Australian people talk, not like we do from TV or from studies. (But) *as I said, they lose focus on their studies, they just start to party too much I think.* (Find a) *balance, yeah.*

He said one of the issues faced by international students is moving from the Chinese style of education to a freer Western environment.

From my personal background, ah, education culture was more conservative. You have to study, you have to pass the test, and ah, the teachers' authority cannot be challenged. But I think in Australia that was a little bit different. I think once international student go into Australian education system, especially Asian background, they feel much more relaxed and they don't really pay much attention to the teachers any more.

4.9.5 Daisy

Daisy also made some interesting observations about the maturity of Chinese students, when compared with young people in Australia.

Most of my friends just go on studying. They don't know how to cook, how to tidy room, and they don't know if you want to make a deal how to talk, how to discuss. They don't know about that. The only thing they need to know is study and maybe they just go out for social life.

Daisy felt that the major cause of failure among international students was their inability to, as she put it, manage themselves.

A lot of people can't pass. … (They) *fail university because they can't control their time, because they can't manage their study and the social life and their … their social life. And that's why they failure. …. I like the education system, because YOU need to learn. ... As long as you want to learn, you know how to listen to the teacher, how to study by yourself, how to read book. And if you have questions, you need to learn how to solve the questions. You search the information from the internet, and then if you can still not understand it, you can discuss with your tutor.*

In acknowledging that many Chinese and local students don't mix much, Daisy said although tutorials provided some opportunities the structure of university classes generally didn't encourage cross cultural communication.

It interesting you know because the class isn't like China. … it's hard to know others. … In the lecture, it's really big lecture room and you don't know each other. You don't talk to each other…. This semester we study together, but the next semester we choose different subjects and you know, we don't get in touch with each other. … You only have the tutorial together in the university. That's the only chance you have to share the study experience with native speakers.

She found that even moving into campus accommodation didn't provided the integration opportunities she'd anticipated. Her attempts to develop local friendships were constrained by the lack of common ground and she described conversation as superficial.

> *I really tried to extend my friends. I want, to* (be), *you know, more friends with locals, but it's hard. For example after I realised I really need to expand my friends, and Linda and I both moved to Macquarie University accommodation. … We thought it could be an opportunity for us. We could have more friends and have more communication with the locals because there are five people live in one house. ... The problem is we can't (*can*) speak to each other very politely but it's hard to go through it (*develop a conversation*). … Maybe also because our culture and something else. You can speak to each other but if you want to be close friends, it's really hard.*

She agreed that mentoring arrangements that paired international and local students would be helpful.

> *I don't know how about Australian people think, but Chinese people, when they first come here, they really want to make a friend with locals, but it's like if they have this* (mentoring)*, it will help them a lot.*

However she returned to the theme that while universities had a responsibility to provide services to international students, in the end learning was their personal responsibility; if international students can't manage the environment, they shouldn't come.

> *If the university can provide some guidance ... it must be helpful. But in my idea, in my idea I still think person is more important. .... If they can't control yourself, you can't do that* (study abroad). *You don't need someone to push you. You don't need to go overseas.*

You can just stay in China. You don't need to spend that much money on education. It's a waste of money.

DISCUSSION

The struggle of the Chinese students to find friends and to adapt to an Australian way of life has emerged over sections of this chapter. What is evident too is that they know what they need to do to fit in, but without help, they can't quite achieve it. Yet they are quite critical of their Chinese colleagues for what the students perceive as their lack of motivation and independence. However if these criticisms are valid, they could be explained in part by cultural differences and prior education systems which contribute to the social and academic adjustment of international students (Sawir, 2013). Referring to the 12 hours most students are required to spend on campus each week, James said Australian education may be too easy, after the discipline of their Chinese education, and recommended making attendance compulsory, as a way of transitioning international students into the more independent academic environment. The students in this study were all highly motivated, and had the additional benefit of spending 12 months in an Australian foundation program, readying them for their overseas study and all spoke about the independence they gained since they came to Australia. However not all international students become self-managed learners. Burns's (1991) study found overseas students had significantly greater difficulties adjusting to academic requirements such as study methods, independent learning, language skills, participation and time management than local students. The overseas students also manifested significantly higher degrees of stress than did the local students. The challenge for universities is how to identify those students who are not adapting to life in Australia, and developing strategies to help them make the transition. Penny's suggestion of multi-lingual staff in student support services could be a consideration, given that Burns (1991) found overseas students are more inclined to confide their academic, personal and family problems to members of their own ethnic group.

Integration of domestic and international student cohorts has been a focus of a significant body of research (see for example studies by Smart, Volet & Ang, 2000; Owens & Loomes, 2010; Bruguglio & Smith, 2012) and was also raised by the students in the study. However it was also a theme in interviews with the language advisers and discipline academics, and will be discussed in later chapters.

4.10 EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

It has been almost nine years since this study commenced, and the students have now finished their education, and are building careers. In the final interview, and in subsequent telephone conversations and emails, they talked about what they felt the future held, and in this final section in the students' stories, they reflect on their experience and look to their future.

4.10.1 Crystal

Crystal was intensely disappointed she'd not gained permanent residence and rationalised her situation by saying other friends who'd successfully gained PR after competing accountancy studies could not find jobs commensurate with their education. She said she felt excited about her future prospects in China compared to the almost certain poor employment outcome she would face in Australia.

> *I think I got professional skill, Accounting. It should be a brighter road for me to enter. If I stay in Australia … it* (poor employment options) *should be black and white* (definite) *for me. Because I got a lot of friends they cannot find a good job, they cannot find a full-time Accounting job even book-keeper, even accounts clerk, they cannot get offer from the boss, so they doing lots of like job not related to their professional subjects. They just doing sales or something like that. But in China I'm different. Because I'm Chinese. I'm local ... and I got English, I got two language. I know Chinese, I have very excellent Mandarin skill, and on writing, speaking, and I do have, know English. I do can read English reports, can do*

accounting in English and can read like Accounting materials in English from international company. … And I do have the Master degree from UNSW so I think it should be ok for me to find a job.

After returning to China Crystal worked as an intern in a bank for two years before marrying in 2013. She has remained focused on returning to Australia, describing her plans in an email exchange in November 2013.

*(*My husband*) and I want to go back Sydney, because we both think we miss there, and the lifestyle in Australia could be more suitable for us either. So our plan is (*my husband*) will be back for a master degree, and when finished, apply a TR (temporary resident) visa for professional year, finally apply PR. Baby (*born January 2014) *and me will apply partner visa after he gets student visa. Right now the process is applying the University of Western Sydney for July of 2014. I don't know how much probability we have, but we have to try.*

4.10.2 Alice

From the outset Alice was enthusiastic about becoming a permanent resident and starting a business in Australia.

I want to try if I can (to get permanent residence)*. ... Actually I got a plan ... I want to open some business after my study here. I want to, because for me, I think China is really big resource for me.*

However, unable to qualify for PR she returned to China in July 2013.

It just got too hard with all the (migration) *changes (*conversation in July 2013).

Although disappointed she hadn't achieved PR, Alice felt her Australian education had made her a much more independent person who had adapted well to Australian culture and society; she said even after a short time in Australia, she felt more at home here than in China.

> *If you are in China, you feel you are Australian.* (Although) t*he people around treat you as Chinese … when you feel you are different from others you feel upset.*

At the time of our last contact (by email, February 2014) Alice was planning her return to Australia. Her Chinese husband has already returned to complete a master's degree (he already has an Australian degree in Accounting) and a professional year, which should give him enough migration points to apply for permanent residence. If he is successful, Alice and their child, born in October 2013, will also gain PR.

4.10.3 Penny

Although Penny has been successful in gaining permanent residence in Australia, she is still not sure about her future. She was sceptical about the benefits of her master's degree in helping her career and thought she may try to use the accountancy skills she acquired in her under-graduate degree.

> *Maybe next year I will try to do accountants. Because I think I have studied accounting for three years but I never do the accountants. So I think I will to try to find because I like this subject.*

When asked for a final comment, Penny described her time in Australia as challenging but said she had grown in independence and was poised for the next stage in her life, be it in Australia or China.

> *From 2007, April, I come to Australia. …. It's very long time. … I think I'm more independence. I can control all things. I know even* (if) *something happened, I know I can*

> *deal with them.. .. This* (time) *is very hard for me because I miss my family always and I cannot come* (go) *back. … My mom is always sick. I always want to come* (go) *back. It's very hard, hard time. … So next stage …is open, I need to find my purpose.*

At the time of our final telephone conversation in November 2013, Penny was still living in Sydney, working for a Chinese immigration agent and looking for a Chinese husband.

4.10.4 James

James was optimistic talking about his future, and said his ultimate career goal was to be the chief financial officer of a large commercial business.

> *(*My Australian education) *helps me quite a lot. That's the only course I actually did help me to learn what is real business looks like and really practise my accounting skills.*

He said his Australian education had prepared him for the workplace.

> *I could still get accounting job if I stay in China, study accounting degree there … But here I think that you really can choose what you want you to do after you finish your degree. And if you don't really like accounting, you can switch to the something related and you have idea what's the, your daily job is going to be looks like and you can, and maybe you can take a few days to really get used to, to really get to know how to work in the sector but you have general knowledge of that I think. That's all.*

When we last spoke in November 2013, despite trying for almost three years, James had been unable to find an accountancy job. Instead, he had opened his own business, a mobile phone shop in a busy Brisbane shopping centre. In a text message in February 2014 he said the business was going well and he was planning to expand.

4.10.5 Daisy

Daisy has achieved a significant amount since she came to Australia around seven years ago. She has completed an undergraduate degree and a financial planning diploma. She has married her Chinese partner and as a consequence, has secured permanent residence as has her daughter, born in November 2012. However Daisy believes the skills and experience she gained in Australia may ultimately serve her better in China.

> *I am not sure. Maybe I will stay here for three or four years because now I am doing the business and I felt this year, when I came (*went*) back to China I see (*in*) Australia the business is more balanced than China. And if I can use this theory to go back to China, to go to a shop or build up a franchise in China, it's more easy to get successful. And I know Chinese people, they think, they don't have an opportunity to go outside (*overseas*) but they think the Western things is always good. You know, the Pizza Hut, the McDonald, the KFC is very popular in China and the owner make lots of money. But actually when I came here … what I find, the franchise system, when I really run a franchise is really good. But it's like the theory and the way to run a franchise is much more advanced than China. If I can stay here for longer and understand how to run a franchise, I wish to go back China and build up my own franchise.*

At the time of our last contact in January 2014, she was still running a coffee franchise in a busy Western Sydney retail precinct. When her baby was six months old, Daisy's mother took her back to China to raise her while Daisy pursues her career in Australia.

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter has covered a number of significant factors that have affected the students while they have been in Australia. What has come through in their stories is their motivation for coming

here, and the resolve with which they have approached their studies. What has also emerged during their interviews has been the pragmatism and maturity they brought to decisions that have affected their personal lives and careers. A number of major issues emerged from this chapter, including:-

1) The impact of their initial low language levels
2) Their struggle to mix and make friends with Australians
3) Their inability to find jobs
4) The impact permanent migration had on their study choices
5) The lengths Chinese students go to, to secure their degrees.

The next chapters take a different view of international education, seeking the views of the academics and administrators who are involved in its delivery, starting with the language learning advisers.

CHAPTER 5: 'ALL THE WAY'

THE LANGUAGE ADVISERS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

During their undergraduate degrees in particular, most of the students in the study used the services of language specialists who work in universities to assist students with academic language and learning (ALL). ALL educators have a diverse role within most Australian universities and tertiary institutions, providing a range of services from generic to discipline-specific embedded academic programs. Several hundred people now work in this field, engaged in teaching and research (Association for Academic Language and Learning [AALL], 2012). Although ALL advisers generally provide language services to both domestic and international students, the marked increase in international student numbers over recent years has resulted in the development of programs and courses designed specifically for them. To gain insights into the experiences of the Chinese students in the study while also gaining a broader view of international education from the perspective of the language learning specialists, hour-long, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four practitioners employed as teachers and/or in the management of academic support units in universities in Western Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. Because prior agreement had been reached with the participants that neither their names nor the names of their universities would be identified, for the purposes of confidentiality the participants will be called *Catherine, Bryan, Heather* and *Tanya*.

This chapter will identify what the language advisers saw as important issues for international students, and how their experiences and outcomes could be improved. A key theme was the necessity to integrate and develop students' academic language and learning all the way through their degrees, and this is reflected in the title of this chapter.

5.2 ACADEMIC LANGUAGE AND LEARNING ADVISERS' ROLES

The interviewees described similar roles and practices at their four different institutions.

5.2.1 Catherine

Catherine manages a communications skills unit which runs programs for local and international students and also teaches academic skills and runs language development seminars. Unit programs include generic workshops in essay writing and presentation skills, modules in academic writing, critical analysis, thinking and reading, developing research skills and exam preparation. The unit also provides conversation classes designed specifically to assist international students integrate.

5.2.2 Bryan

Bryan is an academic language and learning instructor who lectures in a credit program for international students and for students for whom English is not their first language. The course is compulsory for students who on entry have not achieved a language threshold broadly equivalent to an IELTS 7.0. Courses are discipline-specific, in that they are tailored to improve academic language and literacy in the fields in which the students are completing their degrees. The courses also address what Bryan called academic culture and generic survival skills. The program is not available to domestic native English speaking students.

5.2.3 Heather

Heather is a senior lecturer and the head of a learning centre which provides programs and workshops to develop students' oral and written academic language skills. Workshops cover topics such as academic writing, learning skills, oral communication and postgraduate research. The centre also works with faculties to create workshops and programs for specific degrees or

study units and with faculty staff to develop learning and teaching strategies and resources which support their students' academic skills.

5.2.4 Tanya

Tanya is a senior manager in a study and learning centre which provides international student resources including an online facility, a drop-in centre designed to encourage students to work with academic support specialists and programs which include academic writing, study skills and English language development. The centre also manages a mentoring program which employs two Chinese background students as role models for international students. The study and learning centre has recently introduced a non-compulsory post-entry language assessment (PELA) for international students.

5.3 WHAT THE ADVISERS SAID

What emerged strongly from all four interviewees was a sense of commitment for the work that they do, but also a sense that more needed to be done to assist international students (and domestic students with low language skills) achieve their full potential. All four interviewees spoke about recent reviews at their universities, designed to address many of the issues associated with international education. Only one university had fully implemented its language strategy university-wide, while two were still in the throes of introducing language policy. The fourth institution had also conducted a recent review, but its ALL adviser was sceptical that this, the last in a series, would change much.

Catherine described her university's learning centre as staffed by highly skilled teachers, delivering relevant and targeted programs to students with sub-optimum English language skills. However her comments left no doubt that she felt the university needed to do more for international students, and that responsibility for language development should not be left exclusively to 'opt-

in' programs provided by the language centre, but should be built into the teaching and learning in faculties and departments. She also felt universities should take more responsibility for ensuring integration between international and domestic students, to benefit both cohorts. Catherine suggested that making some activities compulsory would ultimately help international students, a point that was also made by one of the students in the study, James. In discussing the pathway programs that allow international students to enter universities with below-threshold levels, Catherine expressed the view that the pathways situation had become too complex to control, but compulsory post-entry language testing followed by targeted language development could address the situation. A major issue that emerged from Catherine's interview was the need to focus on the professional development of academic staff, so they could be skilled in embedding language development.

Bryan's role differs from those of the other language practitioners, in that he teaches in a discipline-specific credit language course that is mandatory for most international students. While he felt the course was beneficial he also felt that certain factors such as poor attendance at the non-compulsory lecture component mitigated against its success. He also pointed out that although the course is broadly discipline-specific, its effectiveness is reduced because each discipline has a number of elements, all of which have their own discourse (for example, the business course encompasses marketing, accounting and hotel management). Despite these issues, Bryan described the institution-wide, broad strategy introduced in his university as being consistent with the Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency for International Students in Australian Universities, which guide teaching staff who support NESB students (AUQA, 2009). While acknowledging the support universities provided, Bryan felt there still needed to be more, particularly as many students' language level on entry was not high enough to enable them to participate effectively. Describing the circumventing of university language entry standards as 'rife', he expressed the view that economic imperatives dictate that pathway students be

admitted. Bryan was critical that universities don't require academics to have teacher training before being allowed to teach, and strongly advocated professional development to give them both language development but also general teaching skills.

Heather was far less positive about measures her university had taken to improve language standards, describing an environment that has conducted review after review, but little in terms of implementation of recommendations. Although her unit had responsibility for working with faculty staff, she spoke of the frustration of trying to engage faculties and departments which were not responsive to recommendations made by language learning specialists. She was critical of her university for permitting its own language threshold to be undermined by admitting pathway students without appropriate testing. Heather was a strong advocate for embedding language development in core units in undergraduate degrees, and building on those entry-level skills in subsequent years. She also felt that measures had to be taken to encourage Chinese students into activities to interact with native speakers.

The strong theme that emerged from Tanya's interview was that language development was a shared responsibility between students, learning advisers and content academics. Concerned that a significant number of discipline academics did not see language issues as part of their portfolio, she advocated professional development to enable them to know how to assist students with language issues. She also expressed a view that intercultural awareness among academics needed to be developed, and internationalisation of the curriculum needed to occur, to make the learning experience more relevant and rewarding both for international and domestic students.

Although there was variance in the degree of importance they attached to various themes, the language advisers were relatively consistent in terms of what they saw as significant issues in providing the best possible language support to international students. It is acknowledged that these matters were, to an extent, guided by the interviewer's questions. However all interviewees

were given an opportunity to add issues which they felt hadn't been covered in their interviews, and no new themes emerged, although some additional emphasis or explanation was added to matters already canvassed.

5.4 KEY THEMES

Major issues will be discussed in terms of both the literature and also the impact on the students in the study, and include:

1) 'Embedding' language development and developing discipline academics' ability to share responsibility for it
2) Managing the circumvention of language standards through pathway programs
3) Integration of international and domestic students
4) Issues that impact Chinese students' learning.

5.5 'EMBEDDING' LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPING ACADEMICS' ABILITY TO SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT

The notion of embedding language development was the strongest theme to come from the ALL advisers, who broadly agreed that responsibility for developing students' academic language skills needed to permeate faculties and departments, rather than leaving it solely to language specialists. However the language advisers expressed concern that some discipline academics lack the will or the ability to take on the responsibility.

Catherine's observation was that while responsibility for language development should be shared between students, academic units and ALL centres, even when academics knew students had difficulties with language, they lacked the skills to address the issues. Academic staff needed professional development to enable them to better engage with students' language problems.

> *Some of the lecturers, they haven't got the linguistic skills to sort of engage both groups* (domestic and international)*, but that ideally should be what's happening. Staff know the issues in their classroom and they are frustrated they are getting these shonky assignments that are all over the place. So they are aware of the issues but they don't know how to tackle those.*

She also felt that as a learning adviser, she would encourage certain practices to encourage integration (discussed in more detail later in this chapter), but academics aren't aware of how to introduce this into their classrooms.

> *The only way you're really going to get* (integration*) to work is if you embed it in teaching and learning, so then people can't get away from it. ... For example, group work. I would force students to be mixed, but I would explain to students why I'm doing it, how I'm doing it and so on. When I've interviewed students, the international students, they've said they want to be forced, they used the word forced, to be in mixed groups. Because they know it's much easier with their friends, but they also know they are not going to improve their English. So I think it's something that has to come in teaching and learning, or it won't happen. Because the extras are always going to be extra, and people (*students*) generally if they're very busy, they won't go into that anyway. So the only way we can get that mix is if we do it through the teaching classroom. And that means staff development. Because I could do it, because I know a bit more about it, but someone who teaches Accounting may not know all that stuff.*

Bryan was also a strong advocate of shared responsibility for language development, arguing that students and teachers alike needed to accept the fundamental principle that language is central to all learning.

I would mandate discourse analysis as something that everyone has to be able to do. Because discourse is at the core of all communication and if both students and instructors understood that we would have a better outcome. From the instructor point of view you have to understand the role of language in what it is you're getting across. So a lot of people have a very basic understanding of language as nothing more than content transmission. ... Say an undergraduate student enters a discipline, they are apprenticed into the discourse of the discipline, so if you are the instructor you should be the one who is apprenticing them into it. You shouldn't expect them to just get it by osmosis. So both the students and the instructors would have to understand the nature of the discourse and that becomes central to the learning process. So it's not just, 'I don't have to just throw all this content at the wall and hope that it sticks or it doesn't. I have to actually be aware of the way language works, the way language functions, language as a function'.

Bryan argued that a lot of the content academics struggled with international student issues, not only because they don't understand how language functions, but because they lack the ability to teach.

Higher education has to be thought of as a teaching profession ... in the same way as being a high school teacher. You have to be able to teach. So the days of the boffin academic with a tweed jacket who can hardly communicate but writes a lot of books has to be rethought. Maybe that person can't teach. I mean, if you can't teach, maybe you shouldn't be allowed to teach. There has to be a qualification where you have to be able to teach before you are let loose in a lecture theatre or classroom. Because that would mean that instruction becomes better. I think a lot of academics can't handle the diversity of the cohort because they're not teachers.

Building language development into the curriculum was seen as critical by Heather, who supported its embedding into faculties and departments through curriculum renewal, describing what she called horizontal integration as the place to start.

> *Looking at the foundation core units in first year in the BA, in the BSc, in the Bachelor of Commerce, looking at those core first year pre-requisite units of study that students have to do, and embedding into those the appropriate scaffolding in terms of reading for example, and writing, and different assignment topics, analysing assignment questions, all of those different things ... and oral communication as well. ... But you don't stop there. You carry on and you build up the skills as the knowledge base grows, as the complexity grows and of course if students are going to do Honours, again, that's almost initiation into becoming a researcher, so you need to run programs to support the students at that stage as well.*

Heather expressed frustration that faculty support for her team's language development strategies was inconsistent and teachers resistant.

> *There is concern, but it's very patchy. And to get the academics on board is very difficult.*

Tanya also experienced some of the same issues. She saw a natural reluctance on the part of discipline academics who saw their responsibility as teaching subject content and not guiding language, but felt that there needed to be an understanding on their part that they did not need to become language experts to provide help.

> *They'll tell you very clearly it's not their brief. They don't know how, they don't feel comfortable, they don't want to compromise, you know, they don't know what sort of feedback. ... This is where we are going to be doing some work with our lecturers to get them to understand what sort of feedback they can provide to the students ... without*

having to feel like they're going to develop any expertise in this area, but can rely on the expertise of academic specialists at the institution but that they can enter into that first base type discussion with students.

She acknowledged that even with development, she anticipated resistance from some academics which she didn't know how to address.

*We are going to certainly work with the new incoming sessionals, but … it's changing mindsets, it's winning hearts and minds, it's ... a long term view, it's hard yakka, and it's ... wonderful when it does happen (*language progression*) because it is helpful for everybody who's involved in it, but for that proportion of academics who just don't feel that it's part of their brief, I think you know, we will … (*unable to complete sentence*) I don't know.*

She spoke of the limitations of leaving language development solely to the ALL advisers, and the difficulties of working with academics who would rather research than teach.

There has to be a first level and that can't come from the small number of academic support staff that run around universities, that first level of understanding must come in a meaningful way from the students' teachers, tutors ... it's that partnership approach. It's all developmental … Let's work with the academics, there's academic support stuff around, there's a range of different resources around and opportunities for students, rather than ... academic support staff having this constant challenge of 'let me in, let me in, let me talk to the student.'

DISCUSSION

The academic learning advisers' views are consistent with recent studies which found that language development should be incorporated, or embedded, into a student's course of study, rather than as a remedial 'add on', a method Wingate (2006) described as the 'bolt-on' approach.

Wingate says the approach that separates study skills from the process and content of learning, compared to the embedded approach where learning is developed through the subject teaching, has severe limitations. The term 'study skills' itself has misleading implications which are counterproductive to learning, because learning how to study effectively at university cannot be separated from subject content and the process of learning. Harris and Ashton (2011) also argue that a growing body of research suggests that good practice is exemplified by the integration of language and academic skills (LAS) into specifically targeted core discipline units. Stratilas (2011) says while a myriad of support mechanisms have developed in recent times to assist local and international students, no one method has promoted and maintained the progression of academic development at universities. For academic support to become more significant and of benefit to students, it needs to permeate discipline-specific courses and provide the underlying foundations upon which course assessments are based (Stratilas, 2011).

A 2006 study that examined the reaction of a group of teachers in Australia to the needs of Chinese international students found that the teachers tended not to accept responsibility for teaching language in their specialist subjects. Despite being concerned about the educational needs of international students and aware they have particular linguistic and learning needs, these teachers positioned themselves instead in relation to their roles and responsibilities in their specialist subjects (Love & Arkoudis, 2006). Arkoudis and Tran (2010) found while there had been little research investigating the strategies lecturers employed to support international students, two studies provided information about lecturers' views. The first, by Robertson, Line, James and Thomas (2000), focused on the difficulties that international students face and indicated that lecturers attribute international students' problems as being related to their reluctance to take part in discussions, a lack of understanding of lecture content and terminology, a heavy reliance on books, lack of independent learning and lack of critical thinking skills. However the learning advisers were divided on some of these issues; Heather and Tanya challenged the view that

Chinese students lacked critical thinking skills, while Bryan had found a lack of independent learning and critical thinking in the Chinese students he had taught. Given Chinese students spend 12 formative years in the highly controlled Chinese education system, it is perhaps to be expected that they were still at the beginning of the independent learning continuum in their first year of tertiary study. The second study by Kingston and Forland (2008), which asked lecturers in the United Kingdom to compare international and local students, found a range of views from their seeing international students as problematic to seeing them as highly adaptive learners, capable of adding a new outlook to the learning environment. What these studies show is precisely what the students in my study found; there is a lack of consistency in the approach and capacity of academics to adjust their pedagogy to meet the needs of NESB students.

An increasing number of Australian universities, such as Griffith, Melbourne, Wollongong and Macquarie are adopting embedded models which incorporate academic skills as an integral part of a program to meet the specific academic skill needs of students, who benefit from gaining academic skill development while simultaneously learning about discipline content (Baik & Greig, 2009; Skillen, Bronwyn, Percy, Tootel, & Irvine, 2003; Evans, Tindale, Cable, & Mead, 2009; as cited in Kennelly, Maldoni & Davis, 2010). This leads to the development of an in-discipline vocabulary which enables students to take part in extended discourse (Kennelly, Maldoni, & Davis, 2010), an issue which Bryan identified as critical.

A concern for all of the academic advisers was whether discipline academics were willing or capable of responding to what Kennelly, Maldoni and Davies (2010) say is a growing body of knowledge that supports a discipline-based approach to academic and language development. Tanya and Bryan in particular commented that many academics lacked the ability to teach international students, a position identified by Fildes, Cunnington, and Quaglio (2010), who argue that many tertiary educators feel challenged by non-English speaking background (NESB) students

and may not consider themselves qualified to support students' language and cultural needs. It could also be that some academics are not aware that their teaching practice is deficient. This appears to be the case with the academics James referred to, who asked students to put their hands up if they needed clarification, or if the pace of the lecture was too fast. In Skyrme's (2010) study with Chinese undergraduates, they talked about their fear of revealing to those with the power to judge them that their English was inadequate. Academics with more knowledge of teaching NESB students would have known that culturally, many Asian students (and domestic ones too) would not risk embarrassment by asking that of a teacher. It is hard to know if this was the issue with Alice's teacher, or if he was struggling under a heavy workload, when he refused to consult with her. In a sense it is academic, because the outcome was the same. She struggled to keep up with lectures in her postgraduate degree, finding too much content and unable to process information quickly enough to respond to questions.

For the language advisers, the professional development of academics to ensure they have the pedagogic skills to teach a broad range of students emerged as a positive way forward. However the discipline academics were concerned by both their lack of expertise and the suggestion that they take responsibility for the language development of non-English speaking background students. Both will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

5.6 Pathways and Pelas

Regulated under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), pathway programs allow students to move through academic qualification levels with full or partial recognition for the qualifications and or learning outcomes they already have. One of AQF's key objectives is to facilitate pathways to and through formal qualifications, by allowing students to gain skills which will enable them to move to the next level of their education (AQF, n.d.). Many education pathways are available for international students to follow and the majority undertake study in more than one

educational sector. For example, 60% of international students in *Higher Education* had studied in another sector previously and 40% of international students in Australian schools go onto study in the tertiary sector. The *English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students* (ELICOS) sector is the first step in an Australian study pathway for almost half of the international students who study in Australia's tertiary sector (AEI, 2013). While pathway programs provide a diverse, flexible and equitable way for international students who have not gained direct admission to achieve minimum academic and language standards, their flaw is that they don't have a common English exit standard (AEI, 2007). In practice, this enables international students to use pathway programs to enter university with language standards lower than those set by universities. To counter the language deficiency of a significant proportion of their international student cohort, many Australian universities have begun introducing post entry language assessment (PELA). According to Catherine, fewer than one in five international students at her university entered with an IELTS threshold score, and the rest came through pathway programs. She said the entry level at her university had just been raised to IELTS 6.5, which she felt was reasonable for students to begin their degrees. However she said many students who came through pathway programs had language levels below that, and struggled through their academic study.

> *Well the pre-entry is 6.5, IELTS 6.5. But then they have all sorts of other arrangements. So then the arrangement might be a year 12 equivalent from this university or that school. And there are hundreds of those for all universities. It's very complex. … One of our staff did some surveys and I think only about 16% had come in with IELTS. And it's the same in other unis. So they come in through all sorts of other pathways which aren't tested. That's always a problem. And so you have to have a minimum standard, absolutely. Because I think if you bring them in too low you are really killing these kids. They're doing everything they can to try to pass and I know of a few cases in the past who've been driven to suicide.* (Universities are*) not necessarily setting them up to fail, but they are setting them up to*

have a hell of a hard time. So I think you should have a minimum standard and I think you should adhere to it. ... *Even the students coming from our pre-tertiary colleges and pathways struggle. And even when they pass, we've noticed a trend that they pass around the 50s (*50%) *all the time.*

Catherine said the pathways routes were too well entrenched to be changed, and recommended making post-entry language assessments (PELAs) compulsory, to gauge the extent of students' language levels. However she said PELAs would only be useful if universities allocated resources to address the findings.

Most universities now are starting to implement PELAs and I think that's one way of trying to get over the pathways entry. But it has to be followed up with something. … You make provisions. Then you offer things they have to take, like an academic writing module. There's no use doing it and then nothing happens, you know. It's ridiculous.

Bryan also agreed the use of pathway programs to circumvent university language standards was widespread, and attributed the practice to universities' need for funding.

Yes, yes, it's rife. I don't think there's any doubt about that. …There's no end of students who are in that situation and it's hard to sort of know what more to say about that. It's going on everywhere. … One obviously wishes it was not the case. But I can understand why it is happening. I mean, it's happening for reasons of revenue production, so if I'm just being a cold-hearted realist about what's going on in the Australian system, that's what's happening.

Asked why students weren't required to stay in language classes until they achieved universities' minimum language threshold, Bryan said it was not feasible from a marketing perspective.

I think the problem is that the majority would take an eternity to get there. So to move from a 5, 5.5 to being able to really function successfully as an undergraduate academic so to speak, I think would take a period that would be counted in the years, not the months. … I mean it could take, some people I think it could take five, six years. … So it's not a product you could ever sell to anyone. So basically what they are doing, universities are competing with each other to sell their products.

Heather felt the problem was not with the pathway programs per se, but with students' readiness.

*To some extent maybe the teaching and the content (*in the pathways programs*) is very good, but at the end of the day, the expectation those students have is that they have paid (*Heather hit the table for emphasis as she said this*). They've paid for that pathway that means they'll get in. So, in that sort of context I think it's very difficult to say to your pathway students, 'are they ready?'... I think that. … it's very hard. You know, you're not going to be able to change that, I think. I mean, it's up to the university really, and of course the university, I think that it is good that they say (*IELTS*) 7.0, but then there are many ways around that 7.0, and the pathways are one of the ways around the 7.0, and I suppose this is why universities are coming to look at post entry language assessment.*

Heather reiterated Catherine's concern; that there was no point having a PELA if it simply measured the extent of the problem, without putting in place appropriate strategies to address it.

*There's been a rush towards us having these post-entry language assessments and then, 'what do we do now'… In terms of curriculum renewal in foundation programs there would be room to, I guess, address this issue. … It's not clear though how do you address it, because a foundation program of course is for all students in that particular subject area. But if you have students who are well able to write, whereas you have students who need a lot more support, so how to do you tackle that, that doesn't bore these (*one group of*)*

*students to tears, and yet you know, supports these (*another group of*) students, but in a way that is compulsory let's say, and I can't find a better way of putting it, you know, (*so*) it's no longer voluntary that they turn up at the extra support tutorials or whatever it is.*

Tanya was non-committal on the extent to which pathway program students entered her university, but said she was aware of the issue.

I'd like to investigate that further at this university. I think that is part of our brief. … People do report that (students with low level English using pathways to enter universities). ... *I'd be interested, I'd be really interested. ... I think it's our responsibility to maintain an overview of quality, that quality assurance is really important. Because we're not we're not doing justice to our students if we don't ... but yeah, I do understand that people have reported that students come through the pathways and are not necessarily, um, as robust in their language standing, or you know, their proficiency levels as say someone who might just do their courses, then does an IELTS, and then comes* here.

Tanya said her institution had set up a PELA in 2012, but students were not compelled to take it.

We have set up now an institutional wide PELA. It's not mandatory, it's opt-in … they can do this indicator tool. We don't call it diagnostic; we don't call it a test. It is an indicator of their English language proficiency or English language, post entry. … We … are now working on providing students with opportunities to work with academic support staff in a closer way than they have before to ensure that they are guided and facilitated through a number of different if you want to call them interventions or learning opportunities.

Although the PELA hadn't been in place long enough for full review, Tanya felt it was working as a non-compulsory language measure. However she agreed that there was a danger that 'at-risk' students would not take the assessment.

> *That's a really valid question* (whether at-risk students could slip through the net) *and we should be looking at it. … You know there's fors and againsts. It's not clear cut is it, PELAS? ... Some lecturers who are concerned about the language communication skills level of their students actually have it sitting on their Blackboard. So that brings it that one step closer. And that way it's a really good opportunity for students to engage with it more directly by having the imprimatur of the lecturer. And that's, and that's nice. The student feels quite comfortable. "I can do this; I can do it with my lecturer understanding. ... it's not remedial, it's not deficit; it's just part of my learning."*

Tanya, like the other advisers, agreed that resources needed to be available to assist students identified at having language issues.

> *We've gotten to the point, 'what's next'. So you've identified the student, what next? It would be, you know, almost immoral, to say, 'Well you're not doing very well. There you go, here's a brochure, go and sort yourself out.' We have resources committed to helping students along their pathway. And what we do is, we track their English language learning and provide formative… we provide opportunities for students themselves to have formative feedback on their English language as it develops in their time here. And we have tools such as a learning plan to be developed. It's all new this, this year, this semester (2nd semester, 2012), by the time we've got everybody recruited to work on this project, but it's a pretty exciting time and we've gone past the PELA, you know and the excitement of getting the PELA, and now, 'does it work?'. It's one part of a suite of robust interventions, a robust pathway.*

DISCUSSION

Pathway institutions which conduct programs to prepare international students for university study have developed as part of Australia's internationalised higher education. Fee-paying

students who lack certain linguistic or academic skills complete short courses at these institutions before entering university. Their commercial focus may influence their educational aims, with one outcome the assumption that students are well prepared for the academic experience. However because of the short-term, preparatory nature of these courses, there may be a focus on generic skills which may not provide a detailed introduction to academic learning (Benzie, 2011).

In a discussion paper that preceded a 2007 national symposium on the English language competence of international students, Murray and O'Loughlin (2007) wrote that there was a wide variety of pathway offerings under the Australian system and that in many instances, international students enter universities through pathway programs without completing a formal test of English, having been 'deemed' to have met the institution's English language requirement. While it is acknowledged that some students may well achieve the equivalent of their university's entry standard, the lack of standardised exit testing from pathway programs makes it difficult to assess whether they have met the tertiary language threshold. For example, the five students in this study all followed dual pathway programs into their studies (a foundation program, followed by further language studies). All came to Australia with language skills below the minimum IELTS level set by their universities, and all undertook additional language classes. None was required to complete another IELTS test before moving into their undergraduate degrees. One of the students in the study completed two degrees with the same IELTS score that she had when she left China, that is, IELTS 5.5. For the other three students, it is not possible to say what language level they had achieved on entry or exit from their undergraduate studies; two waited until they were completing master's degrees before taking further IELTS tests, and after sitting an IELTS test in China the fifth student didn't take another until she had graduated. Using pathway programs to bypass the language threshold is, according to the academic advisers, a major contributor to the difficulties experienced by many international students

Catherine observed that the students at her university who come through pathway programs are not well prepared academically; they struggle and even when they pass their university assessment, achieve barely passing grades. Hirsh (2007) offers some evidence to support that comment, quoting a number of studies that found a correlation between low IELTS levels (the reason many students enter pathway institutions) and poor performing students. Ingram and Bayliss (2007, pp. 40-41) compared academic staff opinions of their students' language competence with their IELTS band scores, and found students whose language was assessed as inadequate for academic study had all failed to meet the IELTS benchmark. Bellingham (1995, as cited in Hirsh, 2007) also highlighted significantly higher rates of poor performance among students with IELTS scores below the entry requirement.

Research has over many years debated the relationship between students' language proficiency and the quality and outcomes of the tertiary experience for both students and their teachers according to Dunworth (2009) who cites studies (e.g. Chalmers & Volet, 1997; McDowell & Merrylees, 1998; Coley, 1999; Jamieson et al., 2000; Bretag, 2007) that propose that language and cultural issues can be the source of frustration and dissatisfaction to both students and staff, if there is a belief that language levels are not suited to the domain of language use. It is in such an environment that the use of instruments to assess language strengths and weaknesses once students have enrolled in their tertiary programs has increased (Dunworth, 2009). The 2007 National Symposium on the English Language Competence of International Students, commissioned by Australian Education International (AEI), resulted from widespread publicity about the English language competence of international students and provided a forum for educators to identify and address the issues impacting on the English language competence of international students and graduates in all education sectors, including pathway students. One of the key actions proposed by the symposium was a more generalised use of English language diagnostic tests, including post-entry, for all students (AEI, 2007).

By 2009, post-entry language assessments (PELAs) were being used in over one third of Australian universities, with a further twelve institutions planning to introduce them. At that time, most were limited to specific discipline areas, although there was a growing interest in offering them at an organisation-wide level (Dunworth, 2009). Yet in spite of their growing popularity, their introduction has not been met with unqualified support, with some concerns for example about the appropriateness of the way in which they are used, particularly when they are identified as "remedial", a term which carries a strong connotation of failure (Dunworth, 2009). The Association for Academic Language and Learning identified the same risk, that potentially, institution-wide PELAs can stigmatise certain student groups and reinforce a 'deficit' approach to student English use (AALL, n.d.). An example from Canada exemplifies that concern; one Canadian university uses its post-entry language assessment to mandate the mix of academic courses and English support a student must take. The lower the level of English, the greater the amount of *English for Academic Purposes* (EAP) support that is required and the smaller the number of discipline-specific courses that are allowed. Conversely, the higher the level of English, the greater the number of discipline specific courses a student can enrol in, and the lower the amount of EAP (Fox, 2004, p.440). It would appear this program could trigger the very problems identified in the literature, that students could be stigmatized, and the additional language development seen as remedial. The University of Auckland in New Zealand has attempted to address this concern by requiring all first year undergraduate students, regardless of their language background, to take a Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment (DELNA), with results used to guide students to language support (Read, 2008).

The different views about PELAs identified in Dunworth's (2009) study were echoed by the learning advisers. As Tanya said, 'they're not straightforward, PELAs, are they?' Keen to avoid any notion of its PELA being used in a remedial or deficit way, her institution uses it as an 'indicator' of

students' English language proficiency, which allows it to provide what she called 'interventions' or 'learning opportunities'.

Catherine, on the other hand, felt PELAs should be compulsory, but was troubled about another issue identified in Dunworth's paper, that PELAs would only be effective if resources are dedicated to addressing the findings, a concern shared by Heather. Bryan was not concerned with PELAs. His university has taken a pre-emptive approach in mandating that all international students must take a credit language subject, unless they can demonstrate they possess an IELTS 7.0 or equivalent.

5.7 INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC STUDENTS

All but one of the students in the case study spoke at length about trying to befriend native English speakers, to help their language development. One student moved from his homestay because the English speaking homestay 'father' was away on business, and the 'mother' was not a native-English speaker. Two of the students studied hospitality, believing that that would give them an entrée into an English-speaking workplace. Another moved from an apartment she shared with a Chinese friend, into university accommodation. All of these attempts to develop local friendships proved less than successful.

International student assimilation with domestic students, but also the broader community, was an issue of common concern to the language advisers, who felt that the lack of integration hindered international students' progress, but also failed to deliver the full benefits of internationalisation to domestic students.

As a language adviser, one strategy Catherine adopted to aid integration was introducing speaking classes designed to develop international students' conversational capacity.

Specifically for international students there's a conversation class. That's really aimed at international students and it's to improve their ... not their business communication but every day speaking skills, and the topics are everyday topics. … such as 'meet and greet', 'taboo topics', 'first impressions' 'hot or not' 'you're wrong I'm right'. So it's very much about language. Because we feel that's what's blocking international students from meeting local students, from participating in class, because they don't know the everyday language. So this is aimed very much at the everyday language not business language.

In discussing how to foster integration, Catherine returned to the theme of language development at the faculty level. She acknowledged that communication subjects exist in many faculties, but was of the view that opportunities are missed because the courses are not designed by language experts, and consequently domestic students also are disadvantaged because the benefits of internationalisation aren't made clear to them.

*Well my starting point in all this was that universities of the 21st century should encourage intercultural learning, from international to local, local to international. I don't think that happens and I still think that if I could teach a unit that would be part of what students have to do, that's the first thing I would do with it. I would make it so local students see that they have things to learn from international students. And I don't think any university in Australia has cracked that nut yet. But I think that's what should happen in an ideal world. Because I think the culture of communication is something that everybody has to develop …The core (*communication*) subjects in each faculty … would be something I'd like to design. And because I have a language background I would design that differently. The way they (*the courses*) are, I don't think they quite work with the language thing. I think you actually have to have some language and culture and some language and content. But I think … language specialists have to be involved there somewhere in developing that*

*sort of stuff. Otherwise it doesn't quite work. For example, our own '*Communication in Language' *… is not written by language specialists and so ... I mean, they try to do some things but it's not the way I would do it.*

Catherine said she felt universities should be doing more, but did not know how this could happen.

I just think we have to engage local students a bit more to mix with international students. And I think we have to facilitate that. How that happens, I don't know. It won't happen in the individual units because people are too busy and they're coming in for a lecture, dropping in, that sort of thing. So I don't know. No university, as far as I know, has found wonderful strategies for engaging international and local students in common dialogue yet. And we need to. I mean there's a lot of rhetoric about the wonderful things they do, and this and that, and bring culture to the campus. But it's all superficial.

Bryan too felt lack of integration was preventing all students from attaining the full benefits that flow from internationalisation, with overseas students not improving their language skills and domestic students not benefitting from the international cohort's experiences. Unsure how to address the separation between the two student bodies, he felt the self-imposed 'ghettoization' of the international student cohort was a natural reaction to living in a foreign culture.

*At the end of the day it is very hard to spend all your time or the majority of your time even with people from another cultural group or another language group, because inevitably you retreat back to that group. You have to feel safe in that, and that's the only way that ultimately you can feel comfortable. I think it's easy, and all our research we are doing here shows that students are, you know, hanging out with people from their own group. And they even say it themselves. We've done a series of focus group interviews and they are highly critical of their own behaviour. They are not, not aware (*unaware*) of it. But it's*

unrealistic. ... It's just human nature to want to speak to someone of your own language group. And how's a Chinese student going to hang out with a bunch of drunken Aussies in a share house? I mean, it's never going to happen. They'd be there for two weeks before they'd be looking for a new place to live because the behaviour is so alien to them.

Bryan's university stages cultural workshops as part of its language strategy, but he, like Catherine, questioned their effectiveness.

*There's a number of intercultural workshops that students take, but again I think students take them, and you can make them compulsory as well, and students go along and they learn all that, but still there's kind of a 'so what' factor. Like when I lived abroad, I did know the culture really well, but it didn't mean you could become more functioning. I mean, what are you going to do? Become (*a native of that culture*)? You maybe get better at dealing with it but your own way of doing things is so ingrained in you that I think it's very hard to convert across. So, students will come more aware, they'll make more of an effort, but it's probably unrealistic to think they will jump across to a different way of thinking.*

While Heather's views were similar, she felt that making some integration activities compulsory would encourage participation.

*OK currently we do have a large number of students coming from China, who really live in ghettos and who interact with each other in Chinese, no matter how much you try to do something about that. So in those units of study where there are large numbers of Chinese students you would … that's a really difficult issue. I don't know how you find your way around that. However, I would … (*pause*), I would probably try to make some things compulsory in that those students would have to, I don't know, enrol in some kind of outside activity involving them in conversation with native speakers and of course we*

would probably have to pay those or give them some incentive. Students come along here for conversation classes. It is not my role, or the role of the learning centre, to provide conversation classes. No way. So the conversation should happen spontaneously with a native speaker, there should be some way of bringing those people together, rewarding the native speakers, so you have got internationalisation happening. (A mentoring program?). Y*es, definitely, but a mentoring program rather different from the ones that are happening at the moment.*

DISCUSSION

As Smart, Volet, and Ang (2000) point out, although Australia currently has one of the highest proportions of international students of any country in the world, there is a fairly strong separation between local Australian students and international, mostly Asian, students. This is supported by Briguglio and Smith's (2010) short-term longitudinal study to examine the perceptions of Chinese students in an Australian university. The semester-long study found that not one of the sixteen respondents reported having formed friendships with locals or having been to an Australian home or family event. The lack of integration between domestic and international students is well understood by the learning advisers who identified it as an issue and supported measures to help Chinese students integrate with other students and with the broader community. However they all acknowledged the difficulties. As Catherine put it, '*No university, as far as I know, has found wonderful strategies for engaging international and local students in common dialogue yet.*'

Some of the universities where the learning advisers work have put in place strategies to help international students integrate, but what seemed to be lacking in some was a whole of university approach to address the issue. Bryan's university had an integration policy in place, but activities such as cultural workshops were voluntary and in his view, of dubious outcome.

Smart, Volet and Ang's (2000) report*, Fostering Social Cohesion in Universities: Bridging the Cultural Divide* says while some academics and students may argue that fostering cross-cultural interactions is not directly related to academic study, to take this position ignores recent research (Volet, 1999; Bosworth, 1994; Jackson, 1994, as cited in Smart, Volet, & Ang, 2000) that stresses the benefits of collaborative activities in enhancing learning outcomes. They argue that international students are disappointed with current levels of interaction, and would welcome strategies which enhance mixing. This very much supports the experience of four of the case study students, all of whom attempted to make English speaking friends, but reverted to their Chinese enclaves when they were unsuccessful. Smart, Volet, and Ang (2000) argue for whole of institution integration strategies which need to be proactive and interventionist and this is supported by more recent research by Fildes, Cunnington, and Quaglio (2010) whose small-scale study into the experiences of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds found that social and structural scaffolding for NESB students should be embedded in curricula and systematically included in university processes from before the university experience starts, through and extending from it.

5.8 Issues that impact Chinese students' learning

The advisers made a number of different comments about various matters that they feel prevent Chinese students from engaging fully in their tertiary studies, including not just the obvious concerns associated with students' language limitations and how they prevent their full participation, but also issues related to their approach to their studies, and how their workload prevents their participating in the language activities designed specifically to help them.

5.8.1 Approaches to learning

While the advisers had different comments about the Chinese students' learning styles, there was broad agreement with recent studies which challenge the notion of the Chinese student as a passive rote learner (for example Biggs 1996; Chalmers & Volet 1997; Cooper, 2004; Kennedy, 2002, as cited in Briguglio & Smith, 2012).

Catherine used the term 'reluctant' to describe the Chinese students in her programs.

> *No, I don't think they are passive rote learners. … I think they are rote learners in the sense that they have done a lot of that in the past. (*But*) I don't think they are passive, I think they are reluctant; reluctant to speak out, worried about asking questions. But once they understand they have to do this to get marks. I mean, we used to have, we don't now, but we used to have a participation mark, which meant you had to ask questions. They used to force themselves to do those things because they wanted the marks. So I don't think ... I mean if they are used to different learning styles, I think they very quickly pick up what they have to try to do here.*
>
> *Where I've seen them most have been in workshops and our workshops are very interactive, and we all do it sometimes even fun topics, so we have a subject called 'speaking out' so we usually have them debating in two halves. And I found when I was taking those classes that they enjoyed all that. When it was explained to them how it was going to work, the rules of the kind of debating thing, then the questions and this and that. I think they lack the skills, in English, not necessarily in Chinese. But it is a different listening style. But they just have to get used to it. But we don't teach them all that, it all happens I guess by osmosis. So three years later they might crack the code and then they're out. (*laughing).

Bryan saw the problem as one of critical thinking.

> *It usually comes down to that critical thinking issue. So they might be able to write quite well, and speak quite well, you know minor errors and so on, but there are still major problems because the student can't be trusted to go off, for example, you know come up with a chapter within 2 months for their Ph. They can't do that because they need their hand held at every step, because that's the education culture they've come from. (*This issue comes up again in Chapter 6 with one the academics describing her role in helping a master's student pass). *I mean my understanding of what you would do in a PhD is you would discuss with me, the supervisor, the data and how you are going about getting it, then you would go out and do it, and you've already got some kind of analytical methodology as part of your technical makeup, so I might just say we might discuss some kind of nitty gritty of what you are going to do, but I am expecting you to come having sort of done it. It might not be the polished form, but you'll report back to me off your own, have come up with the interesting insights and so on. But what I find with some international students is even with very good IELTS is that kind of process is beyond them, because that kind of process involves some kind of critical you know, Western style critical analysis. So the language is not the only thing.*

Heather however challenged the very notion of a' stereotypical' Chinese student.

> *I think again, there's this kind of generalisation about Chinese students' approaches to study and I would not necessarily say that it's that stereotypical approach. I think there is variation, and I think that some of the students probably approach their studies very much like an Australian student would. So I would think that, for example, there's this view that Chinese students are not critical. I think they're very critical. I think they are well able to*

say if they think someone is teaching them well or not. I suppose it's just probably different ways of being critical.

She acknowledged that Chinese students tended not to have well-developed analytical skills, but said that was also true of the domestic cohort.

We have a workshop called Analytical Writing, and the light bulbs go on for all the students in that workshop. We have students coming in here, local students, Australian students, who have feedback on their assignments, 'this is too descriptive, you are not analysing, la de da'. So it's for all students, making that shift from you know, telling the story to really looking at all the information and reshaping it into the themes that they are going to classify it under.

Heather seemed to contradict herself when she went on to say,

They're very weak in terms of using their sources to argue a position or even analysing the debate in a particular area.

Tanya agreed that stereotyping students was meaningless and said those who did so demonstrated their cultural shortcomings.

*We can typify and stereotype Chinese students then know full well that there's no, you know, (*you*) couldn't typify an Australian student. Why should we typify a Chinese student? It's … having worked in tertiary education in languages and intercultural awareness … I could talk forever about this, but you know it's a constant thing when our lecturers have enough of a confidence in and awareness of their own intercultural understandings and curiosity, that will take a healthy curiosity in all that, you know, um the curriculum will change, and so will the stereotypes, and so will the alienation.*

5.8.2 Accessing language support

Most of the learning advisers, in their experience, found an initial willingness on the part of the Chinese students to engage with the language assistance on offer but found that often their enthusiasm was diminished by their work load and other factors, with students often failing to complete the very programs that would assist them. One adviser went so far as to say that the issue wasn't whether universities were providing enough support, it was whether international students availed themselves of it. Three of the advisers believe that making some language components compulsory would help the students, while one adviser felt strongly that opt-in activities were more suitable for tertiary students, irrespective of their language ability or student status.

In talking about the conversation classes which were held specifically for international students, Catherine felt that no matter how enthusiastic they were when they started, their workload inevitably caught up with them, and they couldn't sustain attendance.

> *They initially all want to come, they want to come forever, then they get caught up as with a lot of these pre-set things, they get caught up. They've got three assignments due, they've been up half the night, and the attendance doesn't last, unfortunately. They all want to do the conversation class. They all register for it in the beginning, but the numbers don't ... and I'm pretty sure it's not because our staff are not good, because they are a pretty great team, and they are good teachers. It's just that by mid semester we find attendance drops because then all the assignments are due and so on. Honestly students can't keep up.*

Offering a language course for credit specifically for international students (as Bryan's university does) was an option that Catherine endorsed. Catherine said different faculties at her institution

had different positions on compulsory attendance at language classes, but her view was there was a case for making some components compulsory.

> *We've always been reluctant … to make anything compulsory. ... We have a language proficiency strategy about to come out soon, and what we've done with that is every faculty has a language type unit but* (I don't know) *how much they are really language development. And they're supposed to be for everybody. I don't know quite how they match. I've got no problem with units only for international students. I think it depends how you make it a requirement, whether you give it a credit or not. If it were, I would want to see it as a credit definitely. Not as a non-credit.*

> (One) *unit* (school) *for example, makes attendance at language classes compulsory if you don't reach a certain threshold.* (Another) *school has refused all this time to make anything compulsory. There's a big reluctance, I don't know why, but anyway there is.*

Catherine said while she found the field rich and exciting, she felt frustrated by management reluctance to accept language recommendations.

> F*or example, one year, I was testing students in a post entry assessment. We did it three years in a row, we got all our stats together, compared, blah blah. Then I said to my boss, "That's it. We're not doing this any more." And he said, "Why? This is wonderful." And I said, "No, it's not. You and the executive will not make anything compulsory as a result. We know what percentage are at the lower end that would need support. We're saying we can offer them this, and you're saying, 'No it can't be compulsory". "We are not doing it any more.' And we didn't. So you have those sorts of frustrations.*

Although Bryan's university does mandate a credit point language subject for students who don't have an IELTS 7.0, he feels the course outcomes are diminished because students are not compelled to attend all the course components.

> *Well it's a very complex question. I mean, yes, the course is beneficial, put it that way. But there's also factors mitigating against its success. One is, for example … well I should mention students take a lecture and a tutorial every week for the course for the semester. So the tutorial is assessed for compulsory attendance. But you can't do that for practical reasons in the lecture. As a result there's a hell of a lot of students that just stop turning up to the lecture. So you've got a huge body of students who are actually only attending probably half the course and therefore the effectiveness is dramatically reduced because of that. See what I mean? ... We are certainly experimenting here with a lot of compulsory programs. ... So the course is compulsory, for one thing. The tute, going to at least the tute is compulsory for this course, so they have to turn up to at least half. And then we have assignments within the course, so that you have to do certain things. (*One*) project we have within our program where the students learn about all the major support services at the university, and they have to go to one and actually write a report about their attendance at it, as one of their written reflections in their portfolio. So we are looking at that as one way of you know, dealing with the problem that there's all this support service but no one actually accesses them. I am not sure even whether that's going to work, because maybe they are just going to do it to get the assignment done and then never never go again.*

Heather also agreed that students tended to attend only those course components that were compulsory, blaming student non-attendance on their heavy workload.

*The students are just so overwhelmed trying to get it together for the next assessment. That's their priority really, even though their language is not adequate for that assessment, they're hoping they will scrape through somehow. … In the first part of each semester they (*the language centre programs*) are all very well attended. There are huge waiting lists. Now, this is the second part of semester, and we still offer them but …(*they fall off?)…*yeah.*

Heather was reluctant to introduce compulsory attendance, citing the organisational challenges.

I think that would make it very difficult. … Students have to fit in with their timetables.

However she felt that mandatory attendance at some language programs may be the only option for students who despite gaining entry are not ready for tertiary study.

*You would have to, especially in the foundation years, you may have to address the issue of students who have not, students who despite everything, are not well prepared. And you would have to probably do that in a way that, um (*pausing*), it would have to be compulsory and it may well have to be extra.*

Although Tanya did not comment specifically on the question of compulsory attendance at some activities, her interview indicated that she was not generally supportive. For example, even though she acknowledged some at risk students may choose not to take the institution's post entry language assessment (PELA), she felt it worked as an opt-in program. She was also critical of a resource manual that advocates compulsorily mixing English and non-English speakers.

You can't be that prescriptive. You cannot take away someone's, someone's right and dignity.

DISCUSSION

The language advisers' concern that international students do not access learning services consistently is supported by a number of studies (von Randow, 2005; O'Loughlin & Arkoudis, 2009 as cited in Arkoudis & Tran, 2010). This wasn't the case with most of the students in this study, who although they accessed support in different ways, nevertheless used it. James found it invaluable in his undergraduate degree although he didn't need help during his master's, while Crystal used language services most during her postgraduate studies. Alice and Daisy were moderate users in their undergraduate degrees. Only Penny didn't access language support at all. She knew it was available, but preferred to work alone.

Stratilas (2011) found that students tend to use learning advice centres to help them get through an imminent piece of assessment, rather than as a resource to help them develop their language skills. Support workshops are often used by students to seek assistance with specific assessment tasks and when learning advisers attempt to focus on developing generic assessment skills, students leave the workshop. This seems to add weight to the thrust to embed academic language and learning into courses and assessment, rather than continue to provide services outside the mainstream, which are unevenly accessed, and are used to pass assessment rather than develop generic skills.

5.9 CONCLUSION

There has been much discussion in the literature about what kind of intervention universities should provide to improve the academic and language skills of its students, with most Australian universities providing an assortment of generic academic skills (Kennelly, Maldoni, & Davies, 2010). However the benefits of these programs are uncertain. As Kennelly et al. point out, subject content and knowledge become divorced from the relevant disciplines, resulting in poor attendance by students most at risk. This issue was also identified by the language advisers, who

found attendance at generic programs tended to be sporadic once students got caught up in the demands of their courses and assessment. To address the language literacy of both international and domestic students, there is also a growing recognition that these generic programs are not enough and that language progression and discipline knowledge need to progress simultaneously. This has led to the push for language learning to be embedded within academic faculties, an approach that has the support of the academic language and learning advisers. Their interviews however demonstrate their frustration that despite research that demonstrates the value of shifting language development away from generically-provided and often poorly-attended study skills courses into the classroom, their influence in gaining acceptance has been limited.

The need to cement language development into teaching and learning and to have discipline academics share responsibility for academic literacy was the key thrust of this chapter. However the learning advisers questioned whether the discipline academics had the necessary skills to be able to teach NESB students, with one adviser going so far as to say that tertiary teachers should require qualifications to teach, in the same way that secondary teachers do. The advisers saw professional development as essential to assist discipline academics manage their diverse students, an issue also identified by the discipline academics. Their views about their roles and responsibilities will be explored in more detail in Chapter 6.

Integration of domestic and international students was another concern which the learning advisers saw as limiting the opportunities of both cohorts. This was another issue that concerned the discipline academics, and will also be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6: 'PILE IT HIGH, SELL IT CHEAP'

THE DISCIPLINE ACADEMICS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Some 323,163 overseas students were enrolled in Australia's *Higher Education* sector in 2012; by a significant margin *Management and Commerce* was the broad field of study they preferred. More than 50% of overseas students (164,468) were enrolled in courses under the *Management and Commerce* banner, including *Accounting*, *Business and Management*, and *Sales and Marketing* (Department of Industry [DOI], 2013). By comparison, no other individual broad field of study in the HE sector contributed more than 10% of enrolments (ABS, 2011, [1]).

Previous chapters have reviewed the consequences, both negative and positive, of introducing large numbers of non-English speaking background (NESB) students, often with sub optimum language skills, into classrooms where the language of instruction is English. The students in the study identified aspects of their education which they found challenging, and the university language advisers discussed what they saw as the issues in managing and integrating large and diverse cohorts. These issues are also the concern of the academics who teach them, and this chapter provides their perspective.

6.2 THE DISCIPLINE ACADEMICS

Because of the high percentage of international students studying management and commerce, my intention was to interview discipline academics who teach both domestic and international students in fields such as *Accounting*, *Marketing*, *Business*, *Finance*, *Commerce* or *Management.* My preference was for academics at a minimum level of lecturer, who had taught undergraduate and postgraduate students, who held a PhD, and had a significant publication record, to ensure they had the pedagogic experience to raise and discuss pertinent issues. Another criterion was

that interviewees needed to work at universities with a significant representation of overseas students. The difficulties in finding academics willing to be interviewed for this study have been outlined in Chapter Three (Methodology). To recap briefly, these difficulties ranged from outright rejection, to failure to answer numerous emailed requests for interviews and on two occasions, with lecturers in *Accounting*, passive discussions that were judged to be of so little value that they were discarded. However I successfully located three academics willing to discuss issues associated with international education and all met the selection criteria.

The interviews were semi-structured, to allow me to canvass general themes that had emerged in the interviews with the students in the study, and the language advisers. I attempted to minimize scripted questions and encouraged the interviewees to guide the interview content according to the issues they saw as important or relevant. My questioning then became more a matter of asking follow up questions or asking them to expand their responses.

After abandoning the interviews with the *Accountancy* lecturers, I then interviewed a head of a business school who answered questions in depth and contributed a great deal of additional comment and information related to the ongoing issues that his school was grappling with in managing a diverse student cohort. Because the one-on-one interview format I adopted with the *Accountancy* lecturers hadn't been successful, I used a different approach to interviewing additional discipline academics. Two lecturers from different universities in one state had agreed to participate, so I proposed a joint interview. This approach proved extremely fruitful; while the interviewees did not always agree, they tended to build on the other's comments, adding their experiences and examples, and providing a rich account of how Australian academics juggle the competing priorities of domestic and international students, and its influence on their job satisfaction.

The participants were given an assurance that neither their names nor the names of their universities would be identified, so to maintain their confidentiality the lecturers will be called *Sarah* and *Ian.* To differentiate the management interviewee, *Peter*, from the lecturers, his academic title *Professor* will be used. Certain information about their institutions, including their location, will also be withheld, to minimise the risk of identifying them, and their faculties and teaching responsibilities will be described by the generic term '*Business*' rather than by more specific labels (for example, *Accounting* or *Finance*).

6.2.1 Professor Peter

Professor Peter is head of a business school at an Australian university that has a relatively large cohort of international students. A PhD, Peter has published widely in business-related journals, and has written books and book chapters. He has worked in a number of universities in both Australia and overseas and has significant industry associations. Chinese-born, he was well-positioned to offer insights into Chinese students' motivations and expectations.

6.2.2 Sarah

A senior lecturer, Sarah teaches business subjects at undergraduate and postgraduate level and has received university awards for teaching. A PhD, she has co-written books and has published widely in management and industry journals. Sarah has worked in universities in Europe and Australia, and has consulted to both government and the private sector.

6.2.3 Ian

Ian, an associate professor in a university business school, has received numerous awards and grants. He has taught undergraduates, and is currently teaching postgraduate students, supervising research higher degree candidates and contributing to a university program offshore. He holds a PhD, has co-written books and has published widely.

6.3 WHAT THE ACADEMICS SAID

Although the three interviewees came from different academic levels and responsibilities, they were remarkably consistent in identifying common issues. Not unexpectedly, Professor Peter viewed international education from a management perspective, while Sarah and Ian spoke at times quite passionately and often negatively about how their careers and job satisfaction had been directly affected by the influx of NESB students.

Overwhelmingly international students enrol in business-related degrees and this is evident in the department Professor Peter manages, where around two-thirds of the cohort are from overseas with most from the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Professor Peter saw the failure of international and domestic students to integrate as a significant issue in managing the student mix. He spoke at length about international students' language ability and its effect on teaching, the cost of additional resources to improve their English levels, and their poor employability post-degree. Professor Peter identified problems with his teaching team, a number of whom, from non-English speaking backgrounds or newly qualified, 'didn't know how to teach' and he saw professional development of academic staff as critical. Declining academic standards also concerned Professor Peter, who identified standards in some units as having deteriorated and stated that students' analytical skills were not being developed. Significantly, Professor Peter saw international education in decline and fierce competition emerging between universities for domestic students.

About 40% of Sarah's classes and 30% of Ian's onshore classes are made up of international students, although Sarah said at undergraduate level, the proportion was probably 50%. Although she wasn't sure, Sarah felt most came from the People's Republic of China, although she also had Chinese students from other countries. Also unsure, Ian thought the composition of his cohort was probably similar; most came from south-east Asia including students from the PRC,

Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia. The consequence of too many students with poor language skills was a recurring theme in the joint interview with Sarah and Ian, who both said their teaching was being compromised because their universities had recruited too many students with low language levels. Both said they felt pressured to pass overseas students. Ian and Sarah both reacted strongly to the language learning advisers' proposition that discipline academics should share responsibility for language development, saying they had neither the time nor the training. Ian's response was particularly vehement. He saw his responsibility as teaching business not language, and for developing students' conceptual and analytical skills. Both were critical of their institutions for failing to provide any meaningful level of professional development to increase academics' cultural awareness and help them advance their teaching practice to better assist culturally-diverse students. Ian spoke strongly, and at some length, about how his sense of self-worth as an academic had been diminished by his university's practice of admitting too many students with poor language skills.

6.4 KEY THEMES

The interviewees individually and jointly addressed issues significant to them, some prompted by my questions and others which emerged from the interviews. As with the other chapters, a discussion will follow each section.

1) Rationale for international student recruitment
2) Academic standards
3) Student integration
4) The effect of 'being Chinese' on students' career choices, motivation and education
5) Future of international education.

6.5 RATIONALE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT

When asked about their universities' philosophy in regard to international education, both Ian and Sarah saw it as being primarily driven by money. Sarah believed it was exclusively about revenue generation and said her university was ill-equipped to manage the flood of foreign students.

> *I think it's actually all about money and I don't think the situation is handled well at all in terms of the international students and their needs, their issues and how they interact with the local people. I think it's just purely about money. They would deny that but I haven't seen anything to suggest that it is not.*

Ian said his university's motivation was two-fold; he said that there was an academic interest in the Asia Pacific region, but more significantly, in the absence of other viable markets, it had made a conscious and strategic decision to recruit students from south-east Asia.

> *The economic imperative is there, there is no doubt about it, because they talk about growth opportunities. Where do they see the university growing? ….* (There's) *very little movement or recruitment of students from other Australian states. European students are not likely to kind of provide any meaningful income or growth. … However there is an explicit as well as implicit … objective and interest in Asian studies, in an academic interest in what's going on in the Asia Pacific.*

Although Ian believed that the way international education is being delivered is unethical, he said universities had been left with little option.

> *If somebody defines education, the expectation and the outcomes and what is delivered, what we do, what most of the universities do is unethical. It's unethical, and they've been pushed there and the government knows that. … They say, earn more money because the government is not going to pay more to public universities. So what do we do? We are*

forced to actually find all sorts of expedient ways in order to balance the books. ... There is a price to pay.

DISCUSSION

The focus of the discipline academics in talking about their universities' international education philosophy was purely on the problems it caused; none of the domestic benefits such as business, cultural, diplomatic or research links (Walters, 2001) nor the diversity overseas students bring to institutions (Mahat & Hoorigan, 2007) was discussed. Professor Peter did not volunteer any discussion of his institution's rationale for international education except to acknowledge that it had come to rely on the funds overseas students generated. Although Ian saw his university had a broader academic agenda he did not expand on this theme, and he and Sarah felt the primary driver was revenue.

6.6 ACADEMIC STANDARDS

6.6.1 Lowering the bar

All interviewees said academic standards had dropped following the expansion of international education. Language competence was at the core of the issue for the discipline academics, although Professor Peter saw the issue more broadly.

Ian said his university accepted too many low language level students and expected academics to address the language gap without necessarily having the skills to do so.

> *The job description … for a public university lecturer is to teach and do tutorials and to assess them, and you expect students, like all the other Australian students, to have reached a certain standard. ... With overseas students, they dropped the standards of language in admissions … They just tried to pass the problem on … to unsuspecting*

lecturers who are … expected to be like private tutors or personal tutors, which is over and above their job description and expectations.

The university policy of admitting low language students, he said, inevitably led to high failure rates.

It becomes apparent in the coursework, it becomes apparent in the presentations, it becomes apparent in the exam papers. They fail. I fail quite a few, which is a bit stressful of course because they pay something like $3,000 per unit. So it is a massive investment and lost money opportunity. … Unless the university or universities take control of the admissions they will actually be in this invidious, and this negative and this horrible situation, where students should not be admitted because students cannot cope with it or they can't perform.

He said along with lowered standards came a drop in the reputation of Australian universities.

One of the outcomes overall from this strategy of … admitting lower or unsuitable students to higher education is the individual reputation of the university goes down. … The reputation of … Australia's educational sector as a group is going down, is negative, and when I hear students' reaction when I say, 'would I be able to study in your country with the same level of language as your English?' and they laugh, I keep on thinking, we are sleepwalking. We are selling … the most important thing, the brand. … It's nonsense. We are just selling very cheaply, very low. We do a disservice. We dropped all the standards … for the money.

In Ian's view, academics were aware of the situation but were not in a position to challenge it.

There is peer pressure because nine times out of ten, they will have this kind of unscientific norms, you know the bell shaped standard deviations in the pass rate, success rates, high

distinctions and failures or whatever, and therefore you would look weird, feel awkward, feel the pressure, something wrong, people start to ask you a question about your teaching if you fail too many students. You will have lots and lots of problems and time wasting and stress and pressure and aggro and you're not going to get any thanks from anybody. … The insidious thing is that there is an implicit culture and a norm established in every department whereby you figure out what you have to do, you know, to be okay, to survive, and you look around you, you check who does what, you hear comments, you try to integrate and synthesise and say 'what do other staff do? What do other people say and do?'

Ian said that all participants – the government, universities and academics – know that the international education that is being delivered in Australia is sub-standard but all protect the status quo.

Would I send my kids to a university that does these things? No. And most of the academics do not send their kids to non-G8 universities. … They're voting with their feet. They're keeping quiet. They play the game. It's all of a kind of a charade that protects the jobs. It's an industry, it brings money, it brings foreign exchange, everybody knows that, including Julia Gillard, including Kevin Rudd, including Abbot, including everyone. They're not idiots. They see exactly what's going on, but they say 'oh well, if it's not broken … you know, keep going.'

Sarah's view was that the academics standards had fallen to a point where the majority of tertiary students shouldn't be enrolled, an opinion she said was acknowledged privately by academic staff, but not one they would discuss publically.

It's the elephant in the room that probably 70% of the students are not up to it. … I've just got the overall result in, and it's incredibly mediocre. For my unit of 200, there would only

probably be four people that actually got a high distinction, and maybe twenty that got a distinction. … But the problem is, it's not spoken about, nobody wants to admit it, as in management, and so the staff become afraid and although they admit it among themselves in public they will only say that, oh, they're very rigorous in their assessments. And then I ask, 'well, how is it I have third year students and they can't string a coherent sentence together?' There's an embarrassed look and no discussion. It closes.

Sarah said that she, like other academic staff had adopted a less rigorous approach, to protect their jobs.

There is certainly a lot of pressure. We are judged by the student assessment, the feedback. We are judged by it, whether you like it or not, and in the end the staff are going to have to take care of their own living. That's basically what it's about. And also not to be pushed out. … They say it's not the case, but you know the management will deny it but it just isn't true.

She claims universities encourage academics to manipulate student outcomes, by rewarding lecturers who score well in tertiary evaluations.

*There is one person for example in my school who always, even with larger cohorts, will get a rating of 95 from the students. Now anybody who gets 95 when they have a large cohort clearly has just tried to please the students. And (*he*) admits in public to giving them the questions for the exam, the questions for the tests, etcetera, etcetera, and yet he will get more prizes next semester for this semester's efforts and it will go around and around. And everybody knows that is the case, but nothing is done.*

In his management position, Professor Peter also had experience of the organizational culture that Ian and Sarah spoke about, and said when he took up his position he found nervousness among

staff because their fail rate were high. He had even came across situations where staff set a particular type of assessment to reduce their workload, but also to ensure more students were able to pass.

> *The phenomenon is the number of staff who want to make it quick or who want to make sure they don't have too high a fail rate. … Ever since I started here I actually sensed that culture, and I actually made it very clear to the staff, I don't care if you fail* (students) *provided you actually put your hand on your heart and say that ' yes this is what I've done. The exam is fair. The topic has been delivered properly and that the way I marked is all adequate and everything is covered and the quality is there'. I will stand by it. And it actually took a long time for the staff to understand that.*

Another topic raised in relation to assessment was whether students' language should be evaluated as a component of assessment criteria. Sarah said lecturers had been told on numerous occasions by her university to assess international students' work for content only and not for language, but at times their language was so poor that the content was impossible to judge.

> *We are told time and time again that we are not supposed to mark on English, but usually it's so bad that it becomes nonsensical, and then you are actually marking on that, because it's impossible to guess what it is that they intended to say.*

Sandra said universities pressure academics to pass students, rather than lose them to other institutions.

> *The problem is of course that if these students all start failing, or if we fail people as we should really, it's going to cut down on the market, because there's always somewhere else that will take them.*

In agreeing that standards were in decline, Professor Peter said international students' employability was affected because of their poor communication skills. While recognizing the standard needed improving, he said the structure of his school's programs meant there was little space to schedule courses to bring them up to an acceptable level.

> *We're measured by the employability and you know there are surveys done for people who have graduated and see what sort of employment they gain and one of the key issues is that, and it is generally known and recognized by staff, that the students we've got lack communication skills, or … they have very little sense of understanding Australian business. And we are trying to bridge that gap, but then again, bridging that gap may mean we need the curriculum space, and we do not have the curriculum space.*

DISCUSSION

A number of crucial matters have been raised in this section, including declining academic standards, students' language proficiency, academic peer pressure and responsibility and capability for teaching culturally diverse students.

The academics' view that academic standards have slipped as overseas students have increased has been widely expressed previously, but is nonetheless quite confronting. Birrell first raised the question of academic standards in 2006 when he asked how students who failed migration language tests were able to graduate from Australian universities. His study triggered a rash of media reports quoting academics who claimed to have been pressured into passing students who should have failed, and a rejection by the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVVC) that universities had lowered standards to accommodate international students (Bass, 2007). Bretag (2007) supported Birrell's position, claiming concern was mounting among academics about falling tertiary standards, and arguing 'the quality of the 'product', an Australian university education based on internationally recognised standards of academic excellence, has been undermined by a

rush to recruit students who may not be adequately prepared for a new academic environment in a second language' (p.13). Foster (2011) found although international students consistently earned lower marks than domestic students, their marks were higher in classes with large concentrations of overseas students. Her implication was that a downgrading of assessment standards was occurring.

Ian claimed that low entry standards led inevitably to high fail rates; however 2012 progress rates for commencing bachelor students challenge that statement. For the first time, the pass rate for international students was 84.68%, compared with 83.64% for domestic students who sat the same subjects (Lane, 2013). It is not possible to say with any degree of certainty whether the soft marking that concerns some academics influenced those results. However as Arkoudis (2013) points out, research and media reports repeatedly suggest academics feel pressured to soft mark international students' work and it is difficult to refute these claims, given that universities currently cannot ensure the English language proficiency of graduates.

A second issue raised by the head of school, Professor Peter, concerned graduate employment. Birrell and Healy (2008) highlighted the poor employability of *Accounting* graduates, an experience most of the students in the study shared. Birrell and Healy attributed the poor employment outcomes to language issues, yet three of the students who couldn't find jobs tested at IELTS 7.0 or better, the point which the researchers felt was adequate for employment. James felt his master's degree hadn't given him the skills he needed, and this was identified also by Professor Peter who was aware of curriculum deficiencies in the business school he manages. If the head of a major business school identifies gaps in the curriculum, a restructure of the curriculum may well be timely.

Peppering the lecturers' comments were references to the inadequacies of the students they were teaching, comments which could be interpreted as the shortfall in empathy shown by some

academics to NESB students, that Robertson et al. (2000) identified. Sarah said despite being told to mark assessment on content only, some papers were unintelligible, a comment consistent with Bretag's (2007, p.14) study which reported, 'Academic staff have difficulty grading work submitted by some international students, which, while seeming to demonstrate some understanding of the content area, is written in virtually Incomprehensible English' (p.14). Sarah went so far as to say that because of their poor English, only 30% of students in her classes deserved to be at university. However this narrow view of what constitutes academic readiness focuses only on language and not on the full spectrum of issues that influence academic success, such as motivation, self-efficacy, personal values and self- regulation (Phakiti, et al., 2013), and even the ability of teaching staff (Feast, 2002). Nor does it sit comfortably with the *Good Practice Principles in Practice: Teaching across Cultures* guide. Principle 1, *Focus on students as learners,* makes the point that effective teachers consistently treat all students as learners, and recommends teachers take responsibility for student development (IEAA, 2013, p.3). What emerged is that the discipline academics reject responsibility for the language development of overseas students, and nor do they feel equipped to teach them. On this latter point the discipline academics and language advisers agree; the ALL advisers all questioned the capacity of the discipline academics to teach NESB students. Given the large numbers of international students in Australia, a situation that is unlikely to change significantly, the issue is how the discipline academics can be given the skills, confidence and willingness to teach students from all cultures. Professor Peter discussed how he was addressing professional development in his department, and this will be discussed later in this chapter.

Ian's claim that academics choose Group of 8 universities because of lower standards at non-G8 institutions inaccurately implies that G8 institutions are immune from the challenges of delivering international education. These institutions also have large cohorts of international students (from 16.8% at the University of Western Australia to 26.8% at the Australian National University in

2012) (AEI, 2013); have similar language entry standards (typically IELTS 6.5 in undergraduate degrees) and also rely on funds from international students (Gof8, 2011). As an example from this study, the student Alice completed her master's degree at a Group of 8 university; she was disappointed with the standard of teaching and level of consultation and complained that there were too few academics for far too many students.

6.6.2 Language support

The three discipline academics widely canvassed the impact of the language capacity of international students on their success, and on the broader tertiary environment. All wanted to see the language entry level adhered to, and felt that once students had commenced it was very difficult to improve their language level, a view supported to a degree by studies such as Craven's (2012) which found after two years at university, around half the students in the study were unable to increase their IELTS band scores. Professor Peter acknowledged that many students bypassed the IELTS 6.5 required to study for a business degree at his university, and said to redress the problem he had committed significant additional funds for specialist language training in addition to the university-wide language support, to bolster students' language capacity. However he said the outlay couldn't be sustained.

> *What I have done also is to employ massively, I mean, last year … we actually paid $250,000 for just language support of the international students … within the department. Right. So it's a huge investment, and because of budgetary situation we cannot continue with that.*

Professor Peter identified that despite the university-wide language programs which focused on writing, presentations and communication, a key to developing students and helping their ultimate employability was language assistance specific to the business syllabus.

> *They need more business English which are used for business report, English which are used in the professional firms, in accounting as such. So I actually now, I am contracting another third party …which (*is*) now coming in to provide workshops for students, and again, I don't want to segregate international from domestic. I have to say as well, the English language of some of the domestic students have the same problem.*

Professor Peter explained that despite a range of language programs being made available to international students, whether they got the benefits was questionable because they often didn't attend class.

> *We employ (*language specialists*) to integrate into our curriculum so that we hope our students, primarily international students, to be able to understand how to write an essay, or to make presentations. … We actively ensure we have that sort of support, language wise. But whether the students take it is another matter. … We have got some lectures on English or communication and we cannot guarantee that they get the benefit of it because they are just not coming.*

To aid students' employability at the completion of their degrees, Professor Peter had proposed exit language testing to his faculty, but his university rejected his recommendation.

> *We actually are responsible to ensure that our students are capable of getting employment … I believe is our responsibility to help them. When I was negotiating the budget one of the things I would like to do is … test the (*students*') language skills before they graduate, just immediately before. So okay you come in with 6.5 or 5.5 with the foundation program … and then throughout these three years or two years they speak their own language within their own group, they work, they don't attend classes, they sometimes may be copying one another's work. You can't really see the standard of the English when they*

come out. So I was trying to do but the cost is horrendous. It was totally impossible for me to do it. So I can't do it. Which is a sad thing.

Sarah supported the idea of a foundation semester to enable international students to improve their language skills and learn the language of their degrees, but she doubted that such a scheme would get off the ground.

Maybe the schools at the university that are involved in international students should have their own English teachers there offering classes, particularly focusing on the particular language for the subjects that the students are studying, but then again most of them don't want to spend the money. That's the reality. … I believe …they could spend an extra semester doing things like that. English, learning skills, cultural issues, but you see the problem is, which university is going to be the only one to do it? Because they won't, because the students won't come then because of the money situation … but I actually think that would benefit them enormously. And yes of course to understand the culture takes more than a semester, but to give them the basics, so they've something to work with.

DISCUSSION

The concerns Professor Peter and Sarah identified in this sector cut to the core of many of the issues the language advisers and the students also saw as important. Peter had scheduled additional English resources at considerable expense to help overseas students, but said attendance was poor. Three of the language advisers made similar comments; Bryan said universities provide a wealth of resources that international students don't access and Catherine and Heather said although their language classes were well-attended at the start of semester, attendance dropped as students became overwhelmed by assessment and other commitments. Professor Peter identified that to improve students' employability he had scheduled classes to

help them learn the language of their discipline, and this was also the approach taken at Bryan's university, with a credit language subject for students at below IELTS 7.0 level, with a focus on language germane to specific fields of study. Bryan said the only compulsory component was the tutorial but students tended to go to the first and last sessions only, to find out about assessment. Non-attendance at university was also something that the student James talked about at length, saying many of his friends didn't go to classes; he advocated compulsory attendance.

It is tempting to be critical of international students who struggle with language but don't avail themselves of the resources provided specifically to help them, or to label them as lazy and disinterested, and to a degree, this is how the students in the study categorized some of their compatriots. Burns (1991) found the opposite; overseas students tend to spend the bulk of their time studying and working, with the average overseas student a hardworking and hard-up person with problems with the English language, with acquiring new study skills, and coping with a very different culture. Whatever the reason, it doesn't address the issue, that universities, in acknowledging students need additional language support, commit significant resources but find the take-up low. Professor Peter spent a quarter of a million dollars in just one year for additional language classes, and was in the process of engaging another language consultant to teach his students the professional discourse of business, but with no confidence that international students would use the additional help. The language advisers, bar one, suggested making some academic elements compulsory, a suggestion James endorsed. Despite some reluctance on the part of universities to adopt this suggestion, in the face of poor language proficiency, it may be an option worthy of further consideration.

Arkoudis (2012, p.6) makes the point that if students' language on entry were seen as the starting point for further development, the situation would not be overly problematic. Appropriate interventions and support would enable students to master the subject matter of their chosen

area of study while at the same time, improving their English proficiency. Yet what was noticeable through the discipline academics' interviews was that there was only brief discussion of embedding language in the subjects. Although Professor Peter talked about bringing in specialist language advisers, he didn't seem to consider seeking the assistance of the teaching and learning centre to help his academics manage the language proficiency issue. The concept of embedding language seemed to be a foreign concept to the discipline academics. Sarah thought faculties could employ their own English instructors, but didn't see language as a component of her teaching.

6.6.3 Responsibility and strategy for teaching low language level students

The academic language learning advisers interviewed for Chapter 5 expressed a view that discipline academics needed to share responsibility for the language development of international students. Both Ian and Sarah roundly rejected the premise, with Ian saying it wasn't his job and that he shouldn't even have students with poor language levels enrolled in his classes.

> *I think that's a dangerous and false argument because my duties, my expertise, are in business strategy. Therefore, number one, I can talk about business and develop their skills in business strategy. Number two … at postgraduate level I expect people to really be competent, not only conceptually, not only expressing in writing, but to be as good as anybody else, in order to fully benefit from that. So I think that's a cop-out, they're passing the bag, they're passing the problem child if you like to other people. … The job at postgraduate level is to develop the highest level of critical thinking. ... That's the criterion, you know, the underpinning, the baseline … that somebody should be able to express, to read, to write really fluently. No ifs, no buts. That's basically the bottom line.*

Sarah also disagreed that academics needed to share the language development load, citing logistical hurdles. She said while she provided some help to students who asked, she directed

students to language support specialists for assistance. She said she also pointed out that it was their responsibility to seek help.

> *That's a problem because it would be such a huge job … I mean, it would just be too difficult to take on. … I mean, most of them don't even know things like 'select all' and use … grammar and spell-check … I mean, that would improve a lot. They don't even do that much. Even if you tell them, they still don't do it. So it's kind of very very frustrating*.
>
> *If they approach me and say that they didn't understand too much, I will explain it to them separately, but then I will also suggest to them that they take advantage of the English classes and the learning skills classes etcetera that are available. … Actually I do tell them that I speak two other languages myself but I would have to work a lot harder if I went to a university in the country of either of those, than people who have been born and brought up through the school system. And so I try to diplomatically make them understand that it's also their responsibility because there is actually help available to do something about it.*

Ian went on to say that he was not an English teacher (*I'm not an expert in teaching English language*) before outlining strategies that he reluctantly adopted to help those who struggled to understand his lectures.

> *I find myself consciously and unconsciously slowing down when I don't see that I am understood or I don't kind of, you know, get the right expressions or responses. My exposition changes, my rhythm changes. Sometimes it puts me off. Sometimes it slows down to pretty basic, like high school if you like, where I have to take care of them and lift them and take it step by step. … I adapt my slides to get more visuals, to make the points clearer and provide illustrations.*

I find that I change my language, the way I express myself, the stories I tell, which makes it more stilted, makes it more constrained, it makes it more stiff, and less colour, less flexibility, it becomes more simple. I even had comments from students who say, 'are you going to stick to the PowerPoint presentation and the chapter as it is in the book.' And I've said, 'I find that offensive, because this is not a high school level, number one. Number two, I want to use my own personal experience from work, from consultancy, from research, from other things. I want to enrich this material. I want you to actually get used to, you don't learn from one book … open up and see the diversity of views'. And I find it constraining and restricting and stifling.

Ian made it abundantly clear that from his point of view, he shouldn't have to adjust his teaching style because the students couldn't understand him.

There's an implicit assumption that is somebody studies in an English language degree, they can speak the language. If I go to China, to Beijing, and I want to study something, my own basic assumption and expectation would be that I can speak the language. I mean, it's just nonsensical.

Ian argued that his duty was to deliver a good educational experience; it was not his responsibility to make the students learn.

I make clear is that they are responsible for the learning. They're adults. And they decided, they signed up for the unit. I didn't force them; they didn't have to do it. They volunteered. And these are the standards frankly. You know? …. And I am going to go through and deliver a good educational experience training, but I am not going to dilute it and simply go down the lowest or the slowest student's level. I don't do that.

Sarah also argued it was the students' responsibility to follow the lecture, although she too made some adjustments to her teaching style.

> *What I usually do is adapt. I will use words with more than two syllables, but then I will say the word in a simple way so that you are acting like a dictionary at the same time. … But I feel as though again, it's the same situation, that they've actually got to try to keep up. Because we are lecturing in English. English is the medium and that's it. So I will try to adjust to help them but I can't make it too, you know, basic, or childish to cater either. There's a limit to how low I will go* (said laughing).

Sarah says that even though she knows the international students won't understand jokes and colloquialisms, she still uses them as part of her teaching.

> *It probably goes over some people's heads but I just think, again, I can't penalize the people who actually do want to understand things properly. So for example in my classes I will show videos and stuff like that to demonstrate the theory, but I will also talk about personal past experiences. That might include some jokes. And I just feel, I am sorry, I cannot … it's impossible to cater equally for everybody who's in the room. So I do my bit as I said by explaining long words and complex things, but at the same time you know, you just have to accept that's the reality. They won't get it.*

She cited her supervision of a Chinese master's student as an example of poor standards which require extraordinary measures to ensure students with poor language levels pass. Although the student ultimately did quite well, Sarah said it was only because she had instructed him on every step.

> *He was very nervous and he didn't have high expectations of doing very well. … I said to him, 'your English isn't very good, is it?' and he said, 'no'. So I said to him, 'right, so here's*

what we do. You've just got to do exactly what I tell and you, and you do that, and I can help you get through it, but you must do, you know, EVERYTHING that I tell you, and exactly what I tell you, or otherwise you don't stand a chance, frankly.'

DISCUSSION

Although Sarah and Ian spoke about the adjustments they made to their teaching style to accommodate the language level of non-English speaking background students, it was evident that they did so reluctantly, and didn't see it as part of their role. Sarah encouraged her students to seek help from language advisers, and Ian was insistent that it was not his responsibility to help students with language levels below that of his domestic students. Sarah cited the steps she took to help a master's student with assessment, but acknowledged she couldn't provide that assistance to all students. It could well be questioned whether that level of assistance was in fact appropriate or equitable.

There was little consideration given, apart from some adjustments to their delivery, to embedding language within their subjects or assessment, or seeking the specialist advice to help them overcome the proficiency issues evident in their classrooms. Sarah referred students to language advisers, but it is questionable whether they would have been able to develop the language of the discipline that the students would have been hearing in the classroom. Ian was dismissive when students asked if was going to follow a Power-Point presentation or the text, without appreciating how they may have been better equipped to follow the lecture, had they been able to predict what was coming. This was the issue Alice struggled with, when her lecturers didn't follow a consistent style.

What appears apparent is that these long-term academics seem not to have come to terms with the reality that is tertiary education today; in any *Business* classroom, around 50% of students will come from overseas. Some will, and others won't, have the English language proficiency to master

the content of the lectures. Nevertheless, the role of academics in the classroom is to teach, using whatever pedagogic skills they have. That these academics feel they have few options to facilitate the learning of around half of their classes, suggests the need for professional development.

Earlier in this chapter, Ian and Sarah talked about how academics use soft marking of international students' assessment as a measure to protect their academic jobs. It could be argued however that by providing students with ongoing support to aid their English language progression within the environment of their business classes, the academics could legitimately achieve the same outcomes.

6.6.4 Fraud, cheating and plagiarism

The students in the study all talked about the plagiarism and the cheating that they said was common among their contemporaries. This view was echoed by the learning advisers, one of whom said cheating was rife, and the discipline academics, two of whom even suspected fraud in the IELTS language entry tests.

Although he provided no concrete examples, Professor Peter said even those who could demonstrate the university's language entry level may not have achieved it legitimately (Changes to IELTS exam procedures now make this less likely [IELTS, 2013]).

> *There could be fake IELTS tests as well.*

Sarah also raised the possibility of international students using false language entry tests, again with no specific evidence.

> *I'm of a firm belief that these people* (international students) *have actually paid an agent or somebody to actually get a certificate to say they've got 6.5 and they've probably never ever taken the language test. That might be cynical, but I suspect that in a lot of places.*

In discussing the reasons students cheat, Professor Peter said one reason was some students from other cultures did not fully understand the concept of plagiarism. In other situations international students could be working long hours in jobs outside the university and manage their assessment by paying for assignments.

> *It is the way how the students work. The short-termism, the lack of understanding of what is meant by plagiarism … or they work full-time. … It comes back to the whole cultural issue of the international environment they are living in. They don't have the time, they're under pressure, their parents are pressurizing them.*

Professor Peter also spoke of the futility and administrative complexity of prosecuting a plagiarism case, citing a major incident in which a large number of students were found to have paid for an assignment, but which ultimately led to insignificant disciplinary consequences.

> *I have actually instituted a major plagiarism case and we found about* 80 *odd students plagiarised in a particular assignment. … So we did a lot of things. We identified the market, who was running it, the processes. … I personally with a couple of my staff went to the lecture theatre and ... said to them, 'This is what you have done, this is what the evidence shows.' … We needed to investigate each one of them, which we did. … Some of them actually said, 'I bought it, I don't know why, I bought it using $70.' And some others said, 'No, we just work together.' … So we identified various levels of plagiarism or misconduct and the whole case went over, all the way to the university disciplinary and so on. We have to go through very very legalistically and at the end of the day, each one of the major culprits appealed with all sorts of different things, and I think it ended up only about four were excluded.*

Professor Peter said the students' appeals were successful because the university was reluctant to be seen to be penalising international students.

> *We actually have got all deans sitting around different rooms, listening to all the appeals. I can tell you, it was a major exercise. And all the appeals, they come back, "No, this is what I did." And they got new evidence. I don't know how, alright? … So of course the university is very careful about it. And you can't actually be seen to be doing the wrong thing to the international students.*

Sarah also expressed frustration at the additional layer of complex administration required to mount a plagiarism case, only to have her university reluctant to act.

> *If you are going to do it properly, it takes literally hours. You have a largish report, let's say, and you actually have to put up a plagiarism case and it takes hours and hours and hours. … And the problem is, again, the students are supported. They (*university management*) will make excuses for the. So you can spend hours and hours filling out these ridiculous pages, for things to go through committees etcetera to prove the case, and then they'll just say, 'Oh well, it's a misunderstanding. They didn't quite get it.' So you know, we have to do those things, but what's the point?*

Ian supported Professor Peter and Sarah's experience, that in plagiarism cases universities tend to find in favour of international students.

> *Nine out of ten if they actually go to appeals they will win, because most of the universities I know don't want to sort of expose themselves into a bigger if you like, public relations, embarrassing stories coming out.*

For Ian, plagiarism is an outcome of what he saw as a fundamental issue; students have to cheat because their language levels are so poor that they can't complete the assessment. He said it was an issue the universities didn't want to deal with.

When it comes to plagiarism, we say 'yes, there is a problem here' and hardly anybody wants to really ask the hard question. Why do these students plagiarise so much? They cannot write in their own words, or interpret or kind of discuss anything. And the answer boils down to, they shouldn't be there.

DISCUSSION

For Ian, the issue of plagiarism came down to poor English language. However Professor Peter saw additional factors such lack of understanding of what plagiarism involves (Alice and Daisy both unknowingly committed plagiarism), or students cheating because of time constraints. What the interviewees don't disagree about, however, is the complex and lengthy administrative procedure needed, if plagiarism cases are prosecuted. The academics interviewed for Bretag's (2007) study felt the same, and described lengthy, flawed processes which rarely resulted in academic penalty. Like the discipline academics, they also reported differences in how domestic and international plagiarism cases were dealt with. It would be very difficult in these circumstances to be critical of academics who may choose to turn a blind eye, suspecting that is what their institutions are doing.

The students in the study were all able to recount stories of academic cheating, as were the language advisers. Incidents ran the gamut from students completing online tests for others, to copying others' papers, to writing assignments for other students. Bryan even found a poster on his department's notice board offering to write essays on behalf of other students. The price for this service depended on the grade the student wanted to achieve.

International students require induction into the academic environment, and that includes specific training in Western academic conventions including acknowledgement of intellectual property (Bretag, 2007). However training is readily available through many if not all university libraries. In concert with research and referencing skills development, students must be made to

understand there is a penalty for academic misconduct, and institutions must be prepared to apply this penalty when necessary.

6.6.5 Personal impact of teaching low language level students

Throughout the interview, the two lecturers alluded to the impact of their teaching environment on them personally. Towards the end of the interview Ian raised the topic specifically, saying that his university expected academics to address not only the subject content, but understand students' cultural orientation and develop their language, and then blamed the lecturers when students did not achieve.

> *They find those excuses to blame others basically. That's the game really. Blame the lecturers who are supposed to be experts and good researchers in … in strategic thinking, in decision making and Accounting, and by the way they should be English language teachers, and by the way they should have cultural awareness of how the Chinese and the Indian students think and like to go, what their background is, and help them to pass and become brilliant students. Nonsense.*

Ian said what he saw as lower standards caused tension among academics.

> *It's stressful because you want to do the right things as educationalists. You get to know the students and like them, so you want to do the right thing by them. You can't divorce your emotions and your feelings and your sympathy, but also you know that if you do start enforcing really good standards like you would do with the English speaking people, students, you will be up again a number of people who would not want to go through the rake-in, if you like, of the problem … The policy is actually, 'how can we actually smooth it over, get it over in a nice way, covert way'.*

He spoke of the personal impact of trying to teach students who were not university-ready.

It actually affects your self-dignity, your self-worth, your self-credibility. You come home and you say, 'well did I actually do the right thing. No. Do I have an option? No'. Because if I stand up and say to my Dean, 'you know, one third of my class should not be there.' He would say, 'maybe you should take a pay cut Ian. Or maybe we should reduce your conference allowance. Or maybe we should cut out the funding for research. And maybe you should teach 90 per cent not 70 or 60 per cent. So make a choice'. So you feel degraded. … I cannot define myself to take a really good quality stance, as an academic, as an educationalist, and therefore my quality, satisfaction of job, satisfaction of life is eroded. We are becoming almost like, not quite as negative as second hand car dealers, but there's a bit of that creeping up on you. You know damn well even the students don't respect what we do. Because we don't enforce the standards.

Ian also spoke of not having enough time to manage his academic functions and having to compromise when allocating his time.

You have your targets for publishing, you have your timetable. You have your diary every day and you look at every single hour with a hawk eye to see, 'how can I squeeze and do my job without being either a workaholic and have no life basically, you know, or to really run ragged and run around, and therefore you make difficult decisions. You have to think like a consultant, like a paid lawyer whereby you say, 'where is my highest income, profit, revenue if you like kind of in a stream coming from. Research, or teaching, or looking after the students, and having consultation'. Consultation for what? So this is where the compromise comes in and this is where your self-respect gets a bit of a knock. This is where you feel you are not as good as you should have been on this and that, so you mark yourself down. … Because they've admitted, they've entered low, unsuitable students into the course here, they have affected dramatically the lecturers and the students, and

nobody has done a study to actually estimate the costs to their teaching staff, to their careers, to their quality of life and quality of work.

Ian spoke of how he felt professionally diminished when an international student who had appealed a fail grade had the grade overturned by the Dean, without consultation.

They undermine your sense of … am I qualified, quality, professional, competent to make a decision and stand by my decision, the process that I followed, the double marking? And therefore I can actually, you know, be proud of what I do. And be credible. You know in the eyes of the students, not only be seen but do it and explain it, you know all the criteria, and yet you have these unscrupulous, you know, managers, or deans or heads of school, whereby they say 'you know what, we have to … find a good way to avoid trouble.' … And then sometimes they even encourage students to complain about 'I don't like your attitude'. Not the mark. 'I don't like your attitude'. You know the lecturer is under pressure because he or she made them, upset them, or they cried, so you have to have somebody else in the office just to actually just protect yourself. And you think, that's not what I signed up for as an academic. And you know I'm proud to do a good job. … I'm happy to be accountable … but I don't want people to actually play dirty games on me.

Sarah contributed only briefly to this discussion, to agree that the current academic environment was damaging academics' self-esteem.

There is absolutely no incentive as an academic to do the right thing. Then that is what makes you feel actually really bad with yourself. Demoralised, actually.

DISCUSSION

Ian, it seems, is not alone in being disillusioned about his career. Bretag (2007) found academia in Australia was much less satisfying than higher education systems elsewhere. This was reinforced

by Coates et al. (2009) who found Australian academics have become less positive about their profession. They analysed responses from the 1,370 continuing and contract staff at 20 Australian universities who took part in a *Changing Academic Profession* (CAP) survey, conducted in 25 countries in 2007, and found except for those from the United Kingdom, Australian academics were the least job-satisfied. The additional burdens imposed by a much larger university sector and increased workloads were major contributing factors. Bexley et al.'s (2012) analysis of responses from 5,525 academics, sessional and casual staff at 20 Australian universities to an online survey found academics with a teaching role were, like Ian, often concerned about a perceived lack of basic academic skills among students, a situation they thought was worsening. However the strongest criticisms were directed at university management, with academics indicating that over-management had resulted in low morale, and a perception that institutions had lost sight of the main game. Many academics in mainstream teaching and research positions were overwhelmed by their workloads and the range of their responsibilities, and were concerned that opportunities for creativity, innovation and originality were being eroded (pp. 396-7). These findings mirror Ian's evaluation of his work environment.

Other studies previously cited in this dissertation have identified that there are fewer staff and more students in Australian education now, and this is one of the factors that caused Ian to talk so candidly about his teaching role. The lack of professional development to help academics manage their changing role is another issue that emerged in Ian's interview and will be discussed in the next section.

6.6.6 Professional development for academics

The academic language and learning advisers recommended discipline academics need professional development to enhance their teaching skills, and this is a view also endorsed by the three discipline academics who agreed that teaching large cohorts of international students requires special pedagogic knowledge. However the experiences of the academic manager and

the business lecturers differed markedly. Both Sarah and Ian said professional development at their individual universities was minimal, a situation that Sarah said was not uncommon in her experience.

> *When I first joined this university I went to one. It was supposed to be a morning seminar about exactly those issues … we just played stupid games. They didn't actually touch on, at all, on the major issues. Again, it was all so PC that nobody … could get to anything meaningful. And I have to say, that having worked at several universities, I actually don't think it's any different from the majority.*

Ian's point of view was similar; from his perspective, academics weren't given appropriate development because it cost money. He said he hadn't been given any cultural awareness training, despite having large numbers of Chinese students in his current courses.

> *I don't have any personal experience in studying or knowing the Chinese culture for example. Would I benefit if I knew that? Absolutely, yes. Would I have changed my teaching? Yes I would. How can I do it? You know, by osmosis? No I can't. Do they provide proper training, something like two or three years of secondment or placing academics overseas or bringing other academics over here, to show and teach and showcase what's going on. No they don't. Why do they not do that? It's investment, it's resources, money.*

Ian said that no other major export industry would devote so few resources to training its staff.

> *Most of the serious investment firms, advertising companies, mining companies, investment manufacturing companies, what do they do? They send their workers, their people, their staff overseas, or they invite people to talk about culture or differences. They have offices, they have specific training. There is a cross fertilization. I mean, this is where*

the education sector is really shambolic. It's just one of these pathetic things, you know, you know what I mean. We are in the business of training people, we are in the business of developing really high levels of skills and talent … and we do none of that when it comes to overseas students. … Other companies that deal with cars, or with mining, or with iron ore or oil or petroleum or shipping, what do they do? They teach them languages, they take them overseas to Singapore, or China or Japan, or wherever the business partner is, and, they invest in people. And I keep on thinking, this is where the shoddy business comes in, where the universities fail abysmally.

As a head of school, Professor Peter was faced with a different issue; a shortage of experienced local academics with PhDs meant he had recruited many from overseas, or those with relatively recent PhDs. His problem was that neither group knew how to teach.

*This department has got a lot of international staff right? … I do give them professional development. This is actually a continuing dilemma of academic managers in Accounting; on one hand it's very difficult to recruit Accounting lecturers. On the other hand we need lecturers who have a PhD. Having a PhD in Accounting is not common, and therefore we hire people who let's say come from a foreign country who have a PhD, or freshly have a PhD. They don't know to teach. And when they don't know how to teach and they are confronted with kids, 80% of them are international students who have a totally different view about to solve particular concepts. Then they (*the lecturers*) need development. … Last year I hired somebody, a consultant, $20,000 to have small group staff to really teach them all to develop their skills of being able to communicate with foreign language people, and being able to do it effectively.*

Professor Peter said he also had to address overseas staff's presentation skills.

I got a consultant to help the elocution of the staff. Because the staff, the staff has got an accent which is not necessarily, well, let's say if you are not experienced and you are not speaking to the mike, and you are not speaking clearly, and with an accent, you are going to turn off students.

Professor Peter said another challenge in recruiting Chinese staff was that they brought their pedagogic mindset with them, and they needed to be taught, along with the international students, that there could be more than one right answer and the thought process, rather than the answer itself, was often the most important thing.

Education in China works against how we approach education here in Australia. It is actually yes, they want to know the answer. But knowing the answer doesn't mean they've learned a thing. So therefore we actually are now converting our staff in ensuring they are able to go through a process of thinking. … But we need to teach the lecturers to be able to do that. … It's not the answer, it's the thought process, it's the reasoning of it. So that's where, we are actually changing but it is a long haul.

Professor Peter said that the response from academics had been positive, after an unsteady start.

I've got a report from the consultant. … First of all our staff, there are quite a lot of Chinese as well. And then we have got a pocket of older members of staff, or more longer-serving members of staff, and some are very very young, very new, so we've got a big gap there. The older generation, they find it very difficult … 'Why is it that Professor Peter wants me to do this? I have been teaching for so many years'. … They started off with a very resentful kind of attitude but they turned around. They did. And in fact all the responses that came back, unsolicited, they said that they gained a lot from those courses, from the PD that I arranged for them.

DISCUSSION

The Australian tertiary sector has a huge task if it is to professionally develop its academic staff. Yet that may well be what is required. A changing tertiary environment in recent years has enrolled more international and domestic students needing language support and academics (like those on Professor Peter's staff) may lack the expertise to teach this more diverse cohort. Ian said that he was skilled to teach business, not language, yet it is no longer enough to teach one without the other. Marginson (in Arkoudis et al., 2012, p. iii) says the past approach to language development has been to set a test barrier at the point of entry and make students responsible for their own language related development. This, the dominant way of thinking (or, as he says, of not thinking), about English language proficiency, is that the degree program is designed to be developmental and cumulative, but language development, which follows a similar logic, is ignored. As he argues, this approach is not good enough.

The fundamental question, then, is who takes responsibility for language proficiency?

Higher education institutions have been unable to make English Language Proficiency (ELP) a priority, marginalising or pathologising it rather than treating it as a core learning issue (Marginson, in Arkoudis et al., 2012, iv). Studies cited earlier in this dissertation claim that language development should not sit outside, but should be embedded within, teaching and learning. That was certainly the position of the learning advisers; Tanya, for example, saw it as a shared responsibility between students, the ALL advisers and the discipline academics. However academics may need direction in developing the skills they need to integrate language progression into their teaching. Professor Peter recognised his staff needed professional development to expand their pedagogic practice and instituted a department-wide program. A number of the longer-term academics (and Ian and Sarah fall into this category) moved from being resentful at first, to subsequently acknowledging the benefits. This progression may well be a function of developing confidence in having the skills to teach.

A significant number of students leave university (Crystal is an example) with language levels the same as, or lower than, those they had when they started (Craven, 2012; Marginson, in Arkoudis et al., 2012). These students then struggle to find jobs, or to become permanent residents, because after years in tertiary study they simply can't speak English well enough. It is not enough for academics like Ian to say they shouldn't be there, or that he teaches business only. But nor is it reasonable to expect him to share responsibility for ELP without the confidence or the skills to do so. As Arkoudis (2012) points out, many academics are overwhelmed by the English language needs of their students and ill-equipped to deal with them.

International Education is a multi-billion dollar export sector; professional development should be seen as a necessary investment to give academics like Sarah and Ian the ability to impart their content knowledge while improving the English language proficiency of a diverse cohort.

6.7 NEVER THE TWAIN

International students want to mix, and domestic students would benefit if they did, but how to achieve it is a dilemma that challenges overseas students, language advisers and discipline academics alike.

Professor Peter saw integration, and treating the two cohorts equitably, as key problems he faced in managing the international/domestic mix. He said their different skill sets between the two cohorts challenged staff in trying to find a balance between the needs of both, with overseas students often taking precedence and the domestic cohort suffering as a consequence.

> *The international students, they do their own thing amongst themselves. They don't mix well … there is a very tiny percentage of international students who actually do mix well with domestic … Generally our staff will have to try and cater for the expectations and also the skill set of the international students rather than the local students because the*

majority of them are international students. So … the local students end up sort of disinterested or they feel that the university is more concerned about international students, so that creates a sort of sense of perhaps ignoring them. … Engaging both sets, and keeping them, both sets, and managing their expectations is the main things.

Sarah thought Chinese students' failure to integrate was a consequence of poor language skills and lack of life experience. She argued that domestic students didn't want to mix with those from overseas, and said it wasn't the role of the former to help international students with their language development.

*They are often from the smaller cities in China and lacking confidence. They've never been out of China, so they stick together completely, because they've basically … you know, it's too hard for them not to do that in lots of ways. … I can understand the other (*domestic*) students' viewpoint. … All of the students have paid to be there, they've all got their goals in mind, so I don't actually see it as the responsibility of the native English speaker to help to educate the others to learn English. And you know that is the problem. I just don't think it's their responsibility. And they don't want to do it. And they certainly would react very very badly if they were forced.*

While Ian saw the lack of integration as an issue, he concurred that didn't have a role in trying to force international and domestic students to mix.

*I do group projects and you can see that the overseas students will actually club together amongst themselves, usually. The Anglo speakers … will avoid them because they don't want to lose marks. … If somebody says to me, 'I want to get a distinction and I want to work with these people (*local students*). I don't want to work with somebody who cannot speak English,' I do not impose. I don't see that is ethical or educationally effective.*

Sarah also said international students' passive participation created a situation in tutorials where domestic students reduce their contributions.

> *In the tutorials, where it's obviously meant to be interactive, a lot of the local students actually stop contributing and taking part as much as they would because they feel self-conscious and it also starts to irritate them that half of the room or more is just sitting there and actually refuse if you even try to encourage them and to get them to be included and support them within that. They will often just refuse to actually open their mouths. So for what reasons, they could be mixed. It might be they're embarrassed about their English, it might be that they don't know what they're talking about and they know that. There could be a whole variety of reasons, and so often the local students will stop participating because they just feel irritated by it all, and uncomfortable to be the only person that's talking the whole time.*

Ian said he found domestic students' perception of a degree course changed, when they saw large numbers of international students in their classes.

> *I found students who if they see, when they see that that there is a third, a fourth, a quarter, that over a quarter of students (*are from*) overseas and the classroom discussions are not fantastic, the group work and the group interaction is not fantastic, in fact is negative, they perceive the whole course is of a lower quality… Because they (*university management*) have admitted, they entered low, unsuitable students into the course here, they have affected dramatically the lecturers and the students, and nobody has done a study to actually estimate the costs to their teaching staff, to their careers, to their quality of life and quality of work, and actually the experience of the domestic students. Nobody talks about that. In fact, they avoid it.*

DISCUSSION

Professor Peter starting this section by saying 'international students don't mix well'. He could equally have said 'domestic students don't mix well'. The underlying current in the integration discussions is that the international students are a problem for the academics and the domestic students. Even the language is pejorative. Ian says international students 'club together' and English speakers 'avoid them', and talked about how domestic students judge classes with large number of international students negatively.

Marginson (2008) and Sawir (2013) contend that Australian students and teachers may not appreciate the resource and opportunity international students bring to the domestic university learning and teaching context, and that certainly appears true for Ian and Sarah and their classes. Yet whose responsibility is it to make students aware? While Ian says it is not his role to force domestic and international students to mix, it could well be argued that that structuring speaking opportunities within his tutorial groups is exactly a component of his role, given that, as Smart et al. (2000) argue, there are good social, vocational and economic reasons for pursuing integration strategies. Smart et al. contend that interaction between international and local students does not happen simply because the two groups are in close proximity. Lecturers and tutors will probably need to consider more interventionist approaches to facilitate intercultural contact and communication (Volet & Ang, 1998, as cited in Smart, et al.). Enhancing speaking opportunities is important, not just to enable international students to contribute to group discussions, but for domestic students to enable them to develop their intercultural communications skills, an important attribute for future employment (Arkoudis, et al., 2013). The question of integration was raised in all the groups in this study; this section has confined itself to what it meant for the discipline academics in terms of tutorial groups and their teaching. Chapter 7 will review the topic from the perspective of the pro-vice chancellors, before a broader discussion in Chapter 8.

6.8 THE EFFECT OF 'BEING CHINESE' ON CAREER CHOICE, MOTIVATION AND EDUCATION

Professor Peter identified a number of aspects of Chinese culture as having an effect on Chinese students' education, including their decision to study business related courses.

> *That's a very traditional thing. And I'm a Chinese, so I still remember my father when I was starting off, my father said, 'you do Accounting.' Yes? Because it makes money. That's how many years? Many many years ago. But one part of it is immigration policy … But the other part is (*that*) Accounting is generally perceived as a solid discipline of a good standard, well recognized globally, but at the same time give you employment. I think that is generally the Chinese thinking, the Asian thinking.*

Professor Peter said their Chinese way of thinking influenced the daily decisions that students make, giving as an example when Chinese students choose not to come to class or take advantage of language support, believing they can catch up before their assessment.

> *Many of the international students, they could be working as well as studying full time. They work twenty hours, or some of the may work even longer hours, and they use the weekends to do other things, so they actually are quite often, they sacrifice going into the lectures, and they think, and this is a very Asian way of thinking, they think by the end of the time (*when*) they are close to the examination they can cram. … Which they can't.*

Professor Peter said Chinese culture can also be a factor in the plagiarism that all interviewees suggest is rife; sometimes those who help others cheat are not necessarily doing it for personal gain, but as part of their group culture.

> *It comes back to the whole cultural issue of the international environment they are living in. They don't have the time, they're under pressure, their parents are pressurizing them.*

> *… To be honest, some people … who actually help all the other people do the same assignment, they are bright kids. Alright? They are really good kids. … They help one another. They may not (*do it for monetary gain*).*

Another component of the Chinese mindset Professor Peter identified was Chinese students' willingness to manipulate the system for their own ends. Professor Peter spoke about the significant additional workload caused by requests for deferred examinations, and said that approximately 10% of the student cohort sought deferments each semester.

> *We handle about a thousand special considerations … they (*Chinese students*) have a mentality when you give them special consideration, that means they have a supplementary exam. So we have to write, at the time when we … prepare our exam paper, we have to write a deferred paper. But the unfortunate thing is … being Chinese myself I know, alright – they negotiate. OK? They negotiate. So when they negotiate –' I've got this or that or so on' – they expect to be able to have another* (exam). *… We experience really frustratingly that students don't feel the need* (to attend). *OK you are granted a special exam, or a supplementary deferred exam, you'd better come. And they don't. … Some of them say, 'well I'm going to be in China, blah blah. . … So yes, there is a very massive culture of being able to use the system.*

In explaining issues like this, Professor Peter ascribed Chinese students' attitudes to their education as being part of what he called 'short-termism' in the Chinese culture. One aspect is that students don't put in the necessary effort to achieve the outcome they want, seeing a degree as an end in itself.

> *The fact that we saw plagiarism, the increase of plagiarism … We talk about international students who actually work while they are studying, but they just have a wrong expectation of what the system can cater for them, but at the same time I think they do*

have an expectation that they can put in not the maximum amount of effort but get the result. … Chinese are very strong at getting titles. Positions. Output. But not necessarily understand the way how they will have to put in, how they have to self-manage, and I think Chinese are poor at that because of the culture of group think. Because there is a very large group think. Because you are told what to do. Your part is this part. You don't need to worry about other bit. You just do that part well.

Professor Peter said in this culture Chinese students are trained to work towards a goal, but without understanding how much effort is required.

So they don't see the self-management. They don't see that they have to put extra effort, whereas in Australia it's very much leaving it up to you to strive to do your best. But then that sort of education is not the sort of underpinning framework in the Chinese mind. So therefore they are short term. I mean there is a very strong short term culture.

Professor Peter believes that as mainland China has opened up it has emulated what it sees in other countries, but has sacrificed quality along the way. He believes the impatience he sees in China's rush to develop is played out in his Chinese students.

*I see how many people were trying to get to that end product without having to go through all those processes, and I see that there is such a strong short-term culture in it, and I felt that it is actually the mainland Chinese culture, because they saw how bright outside of China has been, and they want to get to that. And Chinese are impatient. I am impatient. (*laughing*). So that sort of mentality actually underpins a lot of situations that I saw in Chinese students, in international students. They want to get the letters; they want to get the outcome. 'You just give me a pass'. We have seen many students, 'tell me what I need to do. Just tell me. Name the figure. Do it. We just want that'. And I have seen many of those.*

Professor Peter sees this 'short-termism' as an historical outcome, but one which he believes is starting to change.

> *But perhaps it is the education culture within China … or what they have been used to, their parents' upbringing. … But I think it is changing. I think more of the Chinese families are more out-looking and longer term thinking.*

Although the lecturers made little comment about Chinese culture, Sarah did discuss the motivations of Chinese students in Australia and in some respects her view was similar to Professor Peter's, that her Chinese students wanted a degree, without having the necessary language capacity or willingness to work hard to achieve it.

> *It's actually … and this is politically incorrect. … I find the Vietnamese, the Chinese from Malaysia and Singapore tend to be actually more interested in getting involved in the degree and working hard and trying to achieve, genuinely achieve. I find that the ones from PRC, I don't know what their original intention was, but in general their language skills are very very poor, even if they have supposedly passed the IELTS 6.5. It's just not realistic to say they are equipped to study … I think that they feel, and it's probably true, that to get on in China they do need a degree. And sometimes they are quite wealthy and haven't done very well there, so their parents have sent to them to Australia. Because I think probably the good Chinese universities would be more rigorous than perhaps things are at the moment, given that if we failed everybody we should fail, there wouldn't be many people passing.*

DISCUSSION

Chinese-born, Professor Peter volunteered his insights into the Chinese thinking about education, including their motivations and the influence of their Chinese education on their current studies. Peter's comments about a range of issues were highly consistent with the views of the students in

the study. Peter saw migration, but more particularly the influence of families, as reasons students tended to study *Accounting*; both were factors in helping most of the students in the study choose that discipline. Some of the issues he identified in Chinese students were those the students in the study observed in their compatriots; their absenteeism from classes and the lengths they go to defer examinations. All said plagiarism was widespread, but Peter identified that plagiarism could be culturally- based, in that good students want to help others. Both Daisy and James said they had done this. One issue where Professor Peter and the students were not in accord was on what he called 'short-termism'. Although Peter saw it as a failing of both Chinese students and their broader culture, the students in this study had quite a long-term and strategic approach to both their studies and their future.

6.9 FUTURE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

The most significant differences of opinion between the discipline academics occurred when discussing the future of international education. While Ian believed that universities would continue what he called 'the money grab', Professor Peter felt that international education was in decline, partly in response to changes to government immigration policy and also because of declining standards .

> *Very much. And obviously the currency and so on, and all the rest of it. I have to say we (*Professor Peter's university and department*) still have a very good reputation in China and so on, but now we are losing that*. … *And of course, many of the Chinese families they look at it, 'Which are the universities with higher reputation.'*

Professor Peter said that his department had seen a 10 to 15% downturn in student numbers over the past twelve months to two years, and that his prediction was that international education would play a lesser role in the future, with ramifications for his staff.

Absolutely! I think so. (The downturn*) will affect (*the department*). It will definitely affect it. … It could be staff lost.*

Professor Peter said that already, competition was mounting among Australian universities to recruit domestic school-leavers to counter the potential decline in overseas recruitment.

*I don't know whether you are aware … the kids, when they finish their secondary school, they're entering into university, and they were choosing universities, the kind of competition amongst universities. They are giving you an iPad, ringing you up, and say that, 'can you drop (*your chosen university*)? Choose me, and then I will give you this.' We (*universities*) are doing that. (*My university*) doesn't want to do that, but all the other universities are doing it. … So you can see the high competition. ..'I will give you iPad, everyone who come here, I will give you an iPad.' Well you (*as a student*) know where to go.*

Professor Peter said to address what he felt would be a continuing decline in international enrolments his university had been working with professional bodies to develop course offerings geared more towards domestic students.

What we have been doing in the last year or so, I'm trying to gear towards the domestic market now, so we are building programs which are more of a domestic market nature. … We have a very good relationship with CPA Australia and therefore we are running programs, particularly for those who graduate with an Accounting degree, for Australia. So it's really more or less for a domestic market.

Sarah and Ian may not be privy to their universities' student recruitment policies so may not necessarily be in a position to know if the domestic market is the focus for the future. However at the time of their interviews (July 2013) they both advocated a reduction in international student

numbers, with a focus on developing quality. Ian reiterated that currently universities have far too many international students with poor English language, and urged universities to accept a lower rate of growth and ensuring students meet strict language standards.

> *First of all, do not lie to them or to us or to anybody else that the students we meet, they're genuinely are as good as our domestic students. Full stop. And if we have that, if we have that, the message will come across and they will know it's growth, small incremental genuine quality and don't be greedy. Don't be greedy.*

Sarah agreed that contracting numbers to focus on quality should be the way forward, and encouraged universities to consider the economic cost of a loss of reputation.

> *The decision is to grow and grow, and so because of the limitations in getting enough Australian based students they are looking still to growing overseas. …* (But) *it's got financial implications that nobody's looked at. There are economic implications to all of that nobody considers. And loss of reputation, as you know which is going to be very difficult to regain or reposition. And it's all very short term. And that's what really bothers me because it's far too short term and really we have huge numbers of students where I am, and the running costs of that are huge. They (*her university*) could easily contract and reduce running costs and that would be a saving, and put quality in instead of endless quantity of 'pile it high, sell it cheap'.*

DISCUSSION

These interviews were recorded in mid-2013, when the international student market was just starting to rebound from the sharp falls of the previous two years. Despite predicting gains, both Sarah and Ian advocated a reduction in overseas student numbers, and an adherence to language entry standards, as measures to safeguard the reputation of Australian universities.

Professor Peter, having experienced the loss of income that followed the 2009 peaks, is repositioning his business school towards a domestic market.

6.10 Conclusion

To summarise, the key issues in this chapter revolved around international students' language capacity. All interviewees felt academic standards had slipped with the growth of international education. While the academic manager felt academics needed professional development to teach diverse cohorts, the discipline lecturers were not prepared to take responsibility for English language proficiency. The inability of the domestic and international cohorts to find social and academic common ground was another challenge, seen from the perspective of the discipline academics.

The final body chapter of this dissertation will examine a fourth viewpoint; that of the pro-vice chancellors (international).

CHAPTER 7: FROM COLOMBO PLAN TO THE THIRD WAVE

THE PRO-VICE CHANCELLORS (INTERNATIONAL)

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Each of Australia's 39 universities has an office dedicated to international education activities, including the provision of information about study programs, visa requirements and academic literacy support services (Universities Australia [UA], 2010). At a more strategic level, senior administrators are responsible for the development and oversight of universities' international affairs, including policies related to international student enrolments, overseas exchanges and research collaboration. Described by a number of titles, but most commonly as deputy or pro-vice chancellor (international) (UA, 2010), these senior administrators have significant influence over the experience of students who come from abroad to study in Australia.

7.2 THE PRO-VICE CHANCELLORS

Three senior administrators from Australian universities with large international cohorts agreed to be interviewed for this study. While there are differences in the organizational structures and titles within the universities' international offices, because all interviewees had responsibility for the development and oversight of international affairs at their institutions they have been described by the standard title, 'pro-vice chancellor (PVC) international'. I used personal contacts to identify three PVCs in different states to approach for interview. Expecting to have the same difficulties in finding willing interviewees as I did with the discipline academics, I was agreeably surprised when all agreed to participate. The interviews were largely unstructured, although some establishing questions were asked. Questions were for the most part open-ended. The administrators were encouraged to discuss matters that they felt were important and these were interspersed with questions designed to address the issues identified by the other participants. To

encourage frank discussion the interviewees were all given a guarantee of confidentiality and consequently neither their names nor their institutions will be identified. All three (*Simon, Robert* and *Michael*) were generous with their time and demonstrated a willingness to discuss the issues openly. Interviews lasted almost two hours, one hour 10 minutes and forty minutes respectively, although the recording of Simon's interview was suspended for approximately 15 minutes when he presented some confidential data.

7.2.1 Simon

Simon moved into the management of international education after a lengthy career in tertiary teaching in Australia and abroad. He held senior positions in international education before taking up his current role in leading his university's international operations, providing strategic direction to international activities, managing partnerships with education institutions overseas and providing quality assurance of international programs. He also collaborates with faculties to promote internationalization of education in teaching, learning and research. Around 20% of his university's students come from overseas. A fifth of these are from mainland China.

7.2.2 Robert

Robert's involvement in international education, both on and offshore, spans twenty-five years. He has worked for a number of institutions, most recently as Pro-vice Chancellor (International) at one of Australia's larger universities, responsible for negotiating international partnerships and overseas enrolments. He has established campuses overseas and as a member of peak education bodies has provided input into Federal Government policy. Around 30% of the students at Robert's most recent university are from overseas, with around half from mainland China.

7.2.3 Michael

Michael has also worked in international education for more than twenty-five years. In his current pro-vice chancellor (international) role, he is responsible for international policy and development,

international projects, and international student recruitment and support. About 25% of the students at Michael's university come from overseas and approximately a quarter of those are from the People's Republic of China.

7.3 What the pro-vice chancellors said

A number of common topics emerged from the discussions. Integration between domestic and international students was a significant issue which all interviewees were concerned with promoting. However there was a difference of opinion as to universities' obligations in assisting international students integrate. A second common concern was the impact of government policy. All PVCs acknowledged that they relied heavily on international education for funding and said a number of policy changes had created an environment of instability that had contributed to both a decline in international students and additional imposts on institutions. All the PVCs discussed Internationalization of curricula and discussed their institutions' progress in responding to the need to internationalize. All felt their teaching staff, particularly the older ones, faced challenges in adapting to internationalised curricula and diverse student cohorts.

7.4 Key Themes

The broad matters that emerged from the discussions with the pro-vice chancellors (international) will be discussed in more detail in this chapter, and include:

1) International education now
2) Resourcing international education
3) International students' language
4) Capacity of academic staff
5) Integration between international and domestic students
6) When enrolments fell: reasons and outcomes.

7.5 INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION NOW

International education has been marked by three distinct phases, according to Universities Australia (UA), the peak body representing the university sector. Aid education was at the core of the first wave, while a focus on mass commercial education drove the second. In recent years, Universities Australia says Australian universities have begun adopting an approach which it calls 'the third wave', an approach which has educational richness as a goal (UA, 2010).

Each of the PVCs talked in terms of this 'third wave' approach, while acknowledging at the same time that international student revenue was and is critical.

Although he said the emphasis is now on providing a quality experience to international students, Simon acknowledged that in the past his university had lacked a strategic approach and had been driven by the need for revenue. He blamed a lack of government funding for the scramble for international student dollars.

> *Traditionally … international education was purely perceived as a commercial activity generating income to the universities. This was the motivation. So at that stage the setting of my university managers, executives, was very narrow. They just see 'if I've got a student on campus every problem is gone'. But actually it's not. (*That's when*) every problem starts. But people didn't see that. They only saw the dollar before everything else.*

> *All universities in Australia are government owned. When institutions are government owned, and they are crying because of limited budgets, when they see that there's an avenue to generate income there's a strong incentive there. Rushing to projects, rushing to programs and partnerships. … Everyone … does everything without a plan, without purpose.*

Simon said an indicator of the 'third wave' approach was the trend for senior administrators of international education to be appointed from academic rather than business ranks.

> *There's a trend that … a number of senior academics with diversified cultural backgrounds are appointed as senior executives managing international operations. That kind of combination of academic knowledge with business knowledge will be a great attribute to the development of international operations.*

Describing international education post-Colombo Plan, Robert similarly argued that Australia had moved past the stage where international education was driven exclusively by its economic benefit, although he said its revenue had changed the face of Australia's universities.

> *There is no question that Australian universities have been able to greatly expand their research capacity, their facilities, their infrastructure, IT and … their support services because of the international dollars.*

He said however universities are now engaging in a lengthy process of trying to improve international students' experiences.

> *There have actually been a couple of stages in the internationalization of Australian education, and the first really was just to go out and recruit students for the purpose of money and so on. The second … was to actually internationalize the curriculum, internationalize the faculty, internationalize really the experience of Australian students as well. … One of the problems is that when students came to Australia, yes, efforts were made to acculturise or acculturate them, but there wasn't nearly enough effort and enough expenditure on actually ensuring that their experience was the equal of the Australian students. And across Australia, government universities are really concentrating on this now. …* (But) *I think it's going to be a long road*.

Michael also described the third stage of international education as the driving force in all Australian universities, leading to significant changes in university teaching.

> *You wouldn't have spoken to any university that hasn't said they want to internationalize their university and so the opportunity to broaden your outlook in curriculum, in student services, in teaching methods, in engagement with the community, in learning. … One of the things we value is, we had to change the way we talk. So for example, with AUSAID students. AUSAID students come to us and they are from a developing country and they have a scholarship from their country and they've got a job to go back to. … And we used to teach, say in urban planning, ten to fifteen years ago, we'd teach about Australian urban planning. And they'd sit there from Semarang in Indonesia, and Shanghai and they'd say, 'this is totally irrelevant to us'. … So our academics changed their curriculum, and they then taught, 'these are the* ***principles*** *of urban planning.' … And that's when … we learned from them, even though we are supposed to be the dispensers of knowledge. We changed dramatically the way we actually teach.*

DISCUSSION

The 'third wave' is a commendable direction for universities after the 'gold rush', as the discipline academic Ian described the second thrust of international education.

Michael provided an example from academics' teaching practice to demonstrate how curricula at his university are being internationalised, a process that Robert said was also being applied to his university's faculties, and to the experience of Australian students. However it is hard to reconcile the educational thrust the PVCs have described, with the reports of the participants in this study. Despite Robert's view that Australian students are profiting from internationalisation, a body of research (for example, Owens & Loomes, 2010; Arkoudis, Baik, & Richardson, 2012) demonstrates that domestic students aren't mixing with international students to any great degree, and as a

consequence, are not being enriched by the experience. Nor is the 'third wave' philosophy being felt to any significant degree by either the lecturers in this project, or those who took part in two major studies which found widespread dissatisfaction among university academics (Coates et al., 2009; Bexley et al., 2012). The ratio of students to teaching staff has increased (Coates et. al) and many academics are overwhelmed by their workloads and concerned that opportunities for creativity, innovation and originality are being eroded (Bexley et al.). It is difficult to see how, in this environment, they can be expected to deliver the educational richness that is an aim of the 'third wave'.

7.6 RESOURCING INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

The question of resourcing was heavily to the forefront in the interviews with the pro-vice chancellors.

The research (for example, Burns, 1991), supported by both the students in the study and the language advisors, found that international students frequently do not avail themselves of the full range of support services available to them, a position Simon agreed with. Nevertheless he still felt that more resources were needed to support overseas students.

> *Our services are not sufficient … not sufficient in the way that purely depends on each individual international student to receive … services which are available to local citizens. But the majority … because of the weakness of language and lack of personality adapting to local conditions easily, don't receive those services and I think government communities are realising that. … The value for Australia is that we able to bring up a number of youngsters that could be world leaders in the future in their own countries, that ambassadorship kind of connection, they are valuable. So services, they are not broad enough.*

For Robert, the question was not whether more resources were required, but how to manage a declining budget in the face of increasing expenses. He said that international education revenue was critical in the university sector, with rising costs and fixed government funding leading to cuts at a number of Australian universities, and declining international student numbers creating additional pressure at a time when competition for the student dollar was increasing.

> *What you've seen with the cuts that are occurring in universities across the place,…..University for example, …. and other universities, ….. as well* (names three universities)*, is that the costs, built in through wage levels going up basically by three, three and a half, four per cent per annum for academics and other staff, and the government holding the funding for Australian students basically at the same level. The only thing is … through the international student revenue but with that falling because of the government regulations and changes we've been talking about, and the high dollar etcetera, and competition from America. After 9/11 … America very much closed its doors and became insular in relation to international students. It's now opened it up and wants the revenue and it's hard to compete with America. That's all made it very difficult, and hence the cutting of staff and the cutting of service.*

For Robert, the burgeoning numbers of tertiary students have created a two-edged sword. Universities are not able to cope without the revenue international education brings, but don't have the infrastructure to support it adequately.

> *The government has been reducing funding. … The universities could not run on the amount of money they get from the government to support the education of Australian students, or even from HECS. … All the discretionary funding comes through the international students. … (*Without international revenue*) … I don't know how they'd maintain their infrastructure, their staffing levels, their research capacity, etcetera.*

DISCUSSION

It is hard to reconcile the pro-vice chancellors' comments about the 'third wave' of education with their complaint of inadequate government funding which has led to an over-reliance on international education revenue. Universities Australia (2010) states that the third wave approach emphasises a broader and deeper conception of international education, with educational richness as a goal, not simply revenue pay-off.

Yet the revenue payoff is critical. Robert in particular talked about the competing pressures of trying to provide services in the face of declining government funding, arguing that universities would not be able to manage without revenue from international students. While running costs are increasing, government funding has not kept pace. Studies and various Government reviews have shown that Australia has historically under-invested in university education. It currently ranks 25th out of 30 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries for which data are available, for public investment in tertiary education, investing just 0.76% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), or almost a third less than the OECD average of 1.12% (UA, 2014).

In addition, student numbers are increasing, as are student/staff ratios, and large numbers of academics are disgruntled (Coates et al., 2009). Factors such as the fracturing of the traditional work roles of academics, and the increasing casualisation of academic teaching, are also having significant impacts on the quality and relevance of tertiary teaching (Bexley et al., 2012). In the face of these factors, clearly there is a significant gap between the ideal of providing educational richness and the reality of having to cut services while depending on every international student dollar simply to keep universities functioning.

7.7 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' LANGUAGE

The reaction among the PVCs, when asked about the language levels of their international students, varied.

Simon's university has set an IELTS 6.0 as the entry point, with no band lower than 5.5. Students who don't have the minimum IELTS 6.0 in all bands enter into a language program at a partner institution.

> *We have a partnership arrangement with them, they (*students*) will be required to undertake 10 weeks English language training, and they can advance into an academic program without taking a test again.*

Simon said research his university had commissioned indicated that students who chose a pathway route to university tended to do better than those with a higher IELTS entry score because the pathway programs usually incorporated a range of study skills.

> *For example, if you got a 6.0, you got into an academic program because you met the entry requirements. Another person got a 5.5 and studied 10 weeks or 20 weeks in packaged program before they came in. But the results are different because those ones who passed through that are better. The reason is that we found a lot of language programs offered through those private providers offered more than language. Embedded are core assessment methods, study adaptation programs … techniques to tackle … exams and things. … In that sense, there is something more than language that we need to provide to the students to help them study. Not just language.*

Despite not requiring another entry test post before starting their degrees, Simon was confident that all students coming through pathways programs met his university's strict entry criteria.

> *We don't take any students who do not meet entry requirements. … When we have pathway arrangements … we will do moderations of their courses. We want to know what courses they offered to students … so we moderate, we review and … we test.*

Somewhat incongruously, given Simon's belief that all students met the university's language standards, it nevertheless uses a Post Entry Language Assessment (PELA) to gauge the writing competence of its student.

> *We give a diagnostic test to all students including Australian students as well … then we analyse the language proficiency level. … It's not an entry requirement. We can't use it in any way to penalize students. The test results can only be used to give us an indication how we, what type of student we have. … Then we focus on the designated group with poor results and focus on them and how we can help them. Obviously the next stage, we call the intervention process … we have what we call English assistance. They can make an appointment.*

Simon said responsibility for dealing with PELA outcomes lay with individual faculties who evaluated their response based on a cost/benefit analysis.

> *The implementation side, the schools vary from each other. Some schools do more, some schools don't do anything. … depending on their point of view for the investment return.*

Robert also supported the use of pathway programs, and questioned whether IELTS was the best measure of a student's capacity to perform well at university. He said that pathway delivered by partner institutions and foundation programs produced students with adequate language and study skills.

> *Universities set up their own English language centres, developed their own tests, and then students moved through that and through the tests of other institutions which they evaluated as being appropriate. They moved straight into university without doing IELTS. There's also the question of whether the IELTS score is a good measure of actual capacity*

> *for academic English, and you know, performing. You could (*also*) enter foundation studies at a lower level and the English there was very much academic English.*

In discussing how universities are structured, Robert felt that a rethink in how academic content is delivered is warranted, given that attendance at lectures by both international and domestic students is poor. Despite his proposition that pathway programs delivered students with adequate English, he went on to question whether international students' language was sufficient to enable them to understand a lecture delivered in the traditional manner.

> *As far as their actually understanding, this has led to a serious questioning … as to the value of the lecture. But that's been questioned for a long time. … As opposed to tutorials and seminars where there's interaction. So where a lecturer is lecturing and pontificating as it were, how can you judge what is being taken in. And also, most universities now have i-lectures. … What happens is that the students are not attending the lectures. They're looking to download the lecture and view it* (later).

The risk, Robert said, was that students postponed viewing lectures to a point where it becomes too late for them to absorb the necessary information.

> *Then of course with everything else they do, there is evidence they download right at the end and they are trying to take everything in and they can't possibly and if they have problems in with language skills, when they simply can't take it in at the rate necessary.*

Michael's view of pathway entry was in stark contrast to the opinions of the other PVCs'; he saw it as a loophole that students used to avoid universities' English language barrier and said it was a significant problem, particularly for universities that he described as second tier.

> *Well one of the things about pathways programs, Navitas, the reason Navitas has been such a great success but is now currently struggling is that they took students who didn't*

meet our English language and or academic standards and they still taught first year curriculums, they still went into second year, but the point is, they missed having to do an English language barrier. And that's why they go in to do it. … Now we have these standards, but in a real sense, say they (students) *come from TAFE, they don't have to do an English language. … We aren't unusual … the second tier universities … they're all pretty similar. It's a major issue.*

In a frank admission, Michael said the reason universities don't insist on IELTS testing after students complete pathway courses because of the damage it would cause the pathway partners.

I can tell you. Because the director of Navitas said if you do that, you'll kill us.

He continued his candid comments by acknowledging that enrolling students with low language levels was counter to their interests. He claimed universities didn't have an option because the industry was market driven, and said his university had adopted a strategy of addressing language issues post-entry.

Even the universities that say they take 6.5, we have absolute evidence that they are letting in people lower than us. … So, my attitude was, recognize the issue, but if we did it and we actually honoured what we said we did, we'd lose so many students. So we said, go with the market, but put in an English language enhancement.

Look I tell you, it sounds dreadful, it's market reality …. If everybody actually enforced the standards they say they have, they wouldn't have students. ... So that's why they start to do catch up. We've done compulsory stuff which we got academics to change their curriculums. That sounds easy but it was very difficult. Take that out. You've only got 24 subjects but you've got to fit this one in. And we now are just doing it with post-grad.

We've worked out a way of doing it with post grad too. But it took two years to do that, of negotiating.

Like Robert, Michael also identified that students, both international and domestic, tended only to attend compulsory or credit attracting activities.

The lectures aren't always attended. And this is another interesting trend. They to go the tutes because they get marks. You don't get marks if you aren't there. … There's a major change happening in Australian universities and this is why universities are moving to blended learning … it's quite common for a lecturer to stand up and there might only be 5 kids in a 100 hall. But it's now streamed, so international kids, even a lecturer with a Scottish accent, a lecturer talking fairly fast, they keep up with those.

Michael rejected out of hand a suggestion that lectures be made compulsory.

Well unis won't do that because we're universities, we're not schools.

He said he had no issue with students not coming to lectures, acknowledging there was value in recording lectures for later replay. The downside, he said, was that it reduced international students' opportunities to mix with native English speakers.

*So they say, 'it's better for me not to travel in on the bus for half an hour an half an hour back, it's better for me to sit there, have it streamed so I can access that. Replay that. Take better notes'. … Now I don't particularly mind (*if they don't attend*) as long as you've got strategies for integration. Now you don't want to international kids who never come. They miss out on the whole other experience. But if you have these other strategies I don't mind if they don't turn up. Now I've been to lectures – have you been to lectures lately? They may be great academics, but that doesn't mean they're great teachers. … It's hard to take notes, listen, take notes in English language, if it's your second language. Whereas if*

I'm sitting in my lounge room I can play it back and play it forward, and stop it. … As long as you've got these other strategies.

DISCUSSION

Issues raised in earlier chapters were also noted by the PVCs. Michael and Robert both talked about students staying away from lectures with the intention of downloading them later, but running out of time to be able to absorb the content. This is very much a symptom of the 'short-termism' that Professor Peter saw in Chinese students. Michael was the only PVC to admit his university accepted students without the necessary language level, because in the market driven industry that is international education, if he didn't other universities would. This was the academic Sarah's point in discussing how her university allowed its standards to be compromised, and the view of the language adviser Bryan, who also felt that universities were in competition to 'sell their products'.

The PVCs had mixed views about international student language, including students' entry through pathway programs.

Simon cited internal research which he said demonstrated that pathway programs often delivered students better able to cope with tertiary study. He said students who couldn't meet his university's entry criteria spent 10 weeks in a university-partner program before starting their degrees. Research on language progression (Craven, 2012, for example) would suggest the students may not be able to increase their language score appreciably in that time. Simon was adamant students met his university's language entry criteria, before somewhat inconsistently saying all students underwent post-entry language assessment (PELA) testing. This raises the question, if students all meet language criteria, why test them? He went on to talk about how language problems identified through the PELA were managed, which seems to call into question

his earlier assertion that all students met his university's language criteria before they started their degrees.

The language advisers made the point that PELAs were only of use if universities committed resources to rectifying language deficiencies. However Simon's university appears to be doing exactly what the language advisers fear; action is left to individual schools to respond as they see fit, based on investment return. Simon's statement that students with language problems, 'can make an appointment' with a language adviser is a superficial response to a significant issue. One of the students, Penny, identified that some international students have language so poor that they don't seek help because they can't even frame a question. An approach that expects these students to seek language support, rather than have it incorporated into their teaching and learning, treats English language progression as an adjunct to, and not an integral part of students' progress. Marginson (in Arkoudis, et al., 2012, p. iii) makes the point that institutions use the distinction between the language medium and program content to limit their commitment to students, and although this may not be the intention, this appears it is the outcome in Simon's university. It could be well argued that students' interests would be best served by a whole-of-university, mandated response to any language deficit identified through post-entry language assessment.

The literature was ambivalent about whether IELTS was a predictor of academic success, but Robert felt it was not. However after stating that pathway programs delivered students with adequate language and study skills, in a seemingly contradictory statement, he questioned whether traditional lectures were effective in delivering content to international students, because there was no guarantee they could understand them. He also expressed the same opinion as the interviewees in the other three groups, that students tended not to attend lectures, but downloaded them to watch later. (The students in the study however offered a different

picture of attendance, talking about full lecture theatres of one or two hundred students). Robert agreed with Professor Peter, that despite students' best intentions, they often left it too late to review or absorb the material, a situation that is exacerbated if they have language problems. Robert volunteered that interactive tutorials and seminars were a better option than lectures, and this would seem a better proposition in terms of providing increased opportunities for overseas students to improve their speaking ability, thus enabling them express their disciplinary understanding in English and engage in their learning environment (Arkoudis et al., 2012). However given the parlous state of university funding, replacing large-scale lectures with small group tutorials and seminars would seem a costly option, and one that may not deliver the desired integration and language outcomes, unless academics such as Sarah and Ian accept that part of their role is encouraging interaction between students, and taking responsibility for second language progression.

Michael saw pathway entry as a major problem for universities, before making the somewhat startling statement that universities don't insist on IELTS testing post-pathway completion, because a major pathway provider said it would be damaged by such an action. Michael, like the language adviser Catherine, said admitting students with low language levels was not in their best interests, but said the market dictated that course of action. Again, the focus is on economic issues and not the educational richness that Michael discussed in an earlier part of the interview.

Although Michael, like Robert, identified that students tend only to attend credit-attracting or compulsory activities, he rejected outright any suggestion that activities be made compulsory, a somewhat inconsistent position given that tutorials are generally compulsory. Tutorial attendance usually attracts marks, but as the student James and some language advisers noted, too few are allocated, to have an impact. It may be time to consider increasing marks for attendance in tutorials and other activities, to encourage students to come. Michael in particular had no

problem with students not attending lectures, saying they could watch i-lectures at home. But this surely misses the point. International students are already isolated in and from their tertiary communities. Non-attendance deprives them of opportunities to integrate, a component of their educational experience that all participants from students, to language advisers, to discipline academics and now the PVCs, say is important. It seems counter-intuitive to suggest that it is acceptable for international students to stay away from the activities that are critical to their education. They came to Australia for an education experience, not one that they could have just as easily, by sitting at a computer in Guangzhou or Beijing.

Barrett-Lennard, Dunworth, and Harris (2011) believe that inculcating an institutional philosophy of shared responsibility and a whole of institution approach to developing the academic language skills of all students is a necessary part of assisting them to develop their language use. The discussion in this section seems to indicate that a whole of institution approach is not a function of these universities.

7.8 CAPACITY OF ACADEMIC STAFF

Although Michael questioned the teaching capacity of some staff (*They may be great academics, but that doesn't mean they're great teachers*) his view was that academic teaching had changed to meet the needs of international students. This was not wholeheartedly endorsed by the other groups of interviewees, or by his PVC peers.

Simon for example, felt that the academics at his university resisted change.

> *I know that there's a strong tendency for academics not to change. They're comfortable with the way they teach. They recycle their lecture notes year after year. Because from their point of view it's economical. It's time saving, you know. … They (*can*) spend more time on research and publication, things like that. It's a challenge.*

When you change the curriculum you change the skills and knowledge of academics as well. Because they are not used to it. "I know a lot of companies, why do you want me to know a Chinese company?' 'What if I don't know?" Things like that. A lot of challenges.

He said academics must take responsibility for language development but said expecting academics to adjust to a different teaching approach is a lengthy process.

It's a challenge to teaching and learning in a globalized environment. At the moment the message to our academics is this. ... The world is globalized, and the composition of students inevitably is globalized. The days are gone that you only teach local citizens where you have same culture, same language skills. … We encourage academics to research, to improve their teaching and creating a number of new ways in teaching and helping international student, but I think this is a long term challenge.

Robert agreed that internationalizing education required a fundamental change to the way academics teach and like Simon, felt that the process had a way to go, particularly for older academics.

I think that you really have to change the way in which people teach. … For example … If you're going to take the economy, economics, are you only going to teach the Australian economy or are you going to actually include other things? If you go offshore and teach in Hong Kong, are you going to insist because you wrote the book on the Australian economy, you're going to teach that in Hong Kong are you going to take into account everything that's in … the students are reading in Hong Kong? … It's a question of how that percolates to individual academics, and whether it's in the Learning and Teaching training that is being given to new academics. And you probably have more chance of success with younger academics than you do with older ones.

In the early part of our interview Michael's position was that his university's academics had adjusted their teaching practice to meet the needs of international student. However when talking about language issues specifically, he intimated that not all academics had received adequate professional development in meeting students' language needs, despite such training being part of his institution's language strategy.

> *If language is seen as remedial, if a lecturer says, 'oh you've got a problem. Go over there', that sends entirely the wrong message and part of our strategy is to run courses for academics, because the hidden curriculum for us is to teach the academics how to do it, so they don't see them (*international students*) as the problem kids over there.*

Michael admitted the teachers who needed most help may not receive training, because attendance was not compulsory, was not university wide and was not directed at older teachers who may not even recognise they need it.

> *Well it's sort of voluntary these language things, it's not compulsory. I guess it's for the ones who are saying, 'look I'm struggling a bit here.' … We don't have a university wide, for everybody. … They do run courses about how to teach international students … but I think that's new teachers, I don't think someone our age who's been teaching, I don't think they've ever been taught how to teach international. … We find when we run the courses 50 academics turn up and say, 'hey I need some help'. But I guess there are those gaps. ... Possibly the worst ones are the ones who don't go and get extra help. And who should.*

DISCUSSION

The students expressed mixed opinions about the academic staff at their universities. Some were outstanding but others were not. Their teaching style was inconsistent, the curriculum was over-crowded, materials were recycled and consultation time was limited. Some Chinese teachers

brought with them the Chinese pedagogy the students had come to Australia to escape. Without exception, the academic language and learning advisers questioned whether discipline academics possess adequate teaching skills. Not surprisingly, the discipline academics saw the situation from a different perspective, positioning themselves as teachers of business not language, and frustrated with having to deal with the low language levels of many of their students.

Recognising that many of his academics needed skill-development, Professor Peter implemented a professional development program. However while the PVCs recognised deficiencies in their staff, they were not being addressed in a strategic way at their universities. All recognised that teachers need to adjust their teaching practice to accommodate the changes that international education had brought; all PVCs commented that the older teachers had the most problems and were least amenable to change. This is hardly surprising given that many would have started their teaching careers at a time when international education (as trade, not aid) was still in its infancy, and overseas student numbers were somewhat fewer.

Discussing how lecturers resisted adjusting to internationalised curricula, Simon felt they were comfortable with the status quo, even to the point of recycling lecture notes because they saw it as time saving. Being time poor was an issue Ian complained about, and is consistent with Bexley et al.'s research (2012) which found many academics were overwhelmed by their workload. Nonetheless, Simon said academics must take responsibility for language development, although this doesn't seem to fit with his earlier statement that students with language difficulties identified through PELAs were sent to language advisers. He said academics, particularly older ones, would take a long time to adjust to the new environment, despite 'encouragement' from the university. He did not say what form that encouragement took, and nor did he identify how academics were meant to acquire the new skills required of them.

Robert also felt it would be a lengthy process before older academics accepted the need for change, saying it could take time for it to 'percolate', implying a rather passive approach by his university to developing its longer-term academic staff.

Michael's view was not dissimilar. He said the training his university provided to academics to help them teach international students was optional, was provided to new teachers and not older academics, and was not university-wide. He agreed that those who need it most may not avail themselves of the development opportunities.

Skilled and committed academics teaching appropriate curricula are fundamental to good learning outcomes for both international and domestic students. Yet the academics in this project, and those in much larger studies (Coates et al., 2009; Bexley et al., 2012), feel overworked, undervalued and tested by their expanding responsibilities. Nearly two thirds of respondents to the Changing Academic Profession survey believed that working conditions at universities have deteriorated. The survey also found Australian academics are dissatisfied with institutional management and support (Bexley et al.). This was the sense that came through strongly from the discipline academics in this study, but was not addressed in any length or detail by the PVCs, who talked about their institutions' expectations of academics, but not how they were supported.

From their interviews, it is clear the PVCs know there are problems among teaching staff, particularly older or longer-term ones. While able to identify the issues, there was no discussion from Simon or Robert about how their universities were developing their academics. Michael's university runs programs to help new academics, but as he says, the older ones who may need it mostly don't come, although they should.

If this is the level of support offered at the universities where the discipline lecturers teach, it is perhaps not surprising that they feel disgruntled.

7.9 INTEGRATION BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC STUDENTS

The willingness, capacity and opportunity of international students to mix with other students and in the broader community have already been identified as critical by all groups interviewed for this study. Indeed it is a common thread in each and every interview. The pro-vice chancellors (international) were no different from the other interviewees in identifying it as fundamental. What was different, however, was that the three had different opinions in terms of universities' responsibility to foster that integration. Simon felt although it was vital, it was up to individual students to decide how and when to mix.

> *I think the key responsibility to international students is what I call integration. …They are not just coming here as a student, they are coming here as a human being. … They are not coming here just purely as undertaking a single task of study. They are coming here to spend a part of their life in Australia.*

He said universities have an obligation to foster contact among domestic and international cohorts, but despite that said institutions couldn't mandate integration.

> *Yes, yes I think universities do (*have a responsibility to help students integrate*), although it's a challenge … We can't force anybody to mix with anybody. OK? But we can create what we call a campus atmosphere and we can create a culture that we arrange a number of activities to encourage them to come together. … Of course it works for some students and may not work for others. The difficulty is that it takes time … and we can't force. We can advise them. That's the difficulty.*

Simon said while there were some success stories from forcing international and domestic students to work together, the fundamental problem was a difference in their attitudes and approaches.

There are some success stories in what we call group assessment but there are a lot of failure stories too because the attitudes towards study are different. I've heard a lot of examples from students … Australian students wait until the last minute. Their assignment will be due tomorrow; they say 'ok let's do it tonight'. But Asian students don't have that confidence. They want to start early, but when they propose to the group members, 'we start early' they say 'why?'

Simon said Australian students were reluctant to work in groups with international students, for fear their marks would be affected.

*Australian students are worried that if they take Asian students' marks, the group marks will be unnecessarily devalued. … So what we say is the concept (*compulsory integrated group work*) is right, but in reality there are some difficulties. But at the end of the day, there's no conclusion here.*

While Simon acknowledged that international students would do better if they mixed more in the broader community he said it was not the university's responsibility to facilitate community contact.

We are aware that there's a need for the university to encourage students to be integrated into a community but still, we don't think it's the university's responsibility. The university's responsibility is to look after students, to facilitate their studies, their learning on campus. So anything that goes beyond the campus, we don't feel that we have that direct responsibility.

We encourage international students that the more you mix with local students, the greater benefit you will get. We know that it's efficient for you to communicate in your own language … but at the end of the day you're studying in an environment exactly the

same in China. … Some students … live together and learn together and even eat together, all using their own language. That's why their English language has never improved at all. I encourage students to live in a hostel with Australian people and that's the best way.

He said Asian students' workload often meant they didn't take advantage of the extra-curricular activities his university funded.

*Well obviously most of the international students would love to participate but some of them refuse to … for a number of practical reasons. Most Asian students have to spend more hours on study, you know, and the common excuse is 'I am sorry, my assignment is due in couple of days, in one week, I can't afford that time'. … Another (*reason*) is that international students come from different families with different financial situations. They really think, you know, I can't waste my parents' money.'*

Robert felt that the structure of Australian universities worked against integration of the two cohorts, but while he could explain the reason why they didn't assimilate he didn't offer any solutions to resolve the issue.

*If we take the whole question of what international students want when they come, they want to actually have a wide and significant experience with Australian students. They don't actually get it ... The difference between, for example, American universities and colleges and Australian universities, and also to a degree, English universities, is that there in America, students go away to college. … and in the UK. After all, Oxford and Cambridge are down in the country, as it were. … Whereas ours are commuter universities, so our students get transport of one kind or another, do their classes, and go home. And they may be working as well. And so you actually find on a campus like (*my university*) that if you walk around it, it seems overly international. That's because the Australian are working, at the beach, at the pub or something like that.*

Robert said a lot more was being done at his university to support international students, but in the end, universities' level of support was resource driven.

> *It's a question of whether they can financially afford to do it. And whether they have the resources.*

Nevertheless he said universities had an obligation to foster integration, but said international students also had to make an effort.

> *They need a buddy system and things need to happen in the first week really and be followed up in the second and third. What often happens now happens in the first week and then it will fizzle. … It doesn't help if they stay with a relative or if they get in small groups and take an apartment or something like that, so that they are really able to just speak their own language. That doesn't help their work at university either. … And they pay the price. … In a sense the only way is if you have the college system in America, and everyone is 'in college' for those three years.*

Michael's university had adopted a comprehensive student support strategy, which included a scheme to help international and domestic students mix both with each other but also in the community.

> *We've got these three young people who run it, and they not only integrate with international and domestic students in the university, but they integrate with the community. So for example, they see you're an international and I'm a domestic and … they see we are both interested in the environment, so they form a relationship with the local creek people … and they go and clean the creek and study the fish and changes, so we do things where there's integration between domestic and international, and they integrate with the community. So there's a sort of triangular.*

Like Robert, Michael also saw students' tendency to cluster in their ethnic groups as an issue both for integration, but also for language development, particularly when they lived off-campus.

> *Because as you know, kids come here and if they don't get into residency, one of the biggest problems that we have, that North America and North Asia don't have … they've put accommodation on campus, so they have to integrate. What we do, not many can go on campus, and the Canadians are in their flats there, and the Koreans go into their flats there, and here on campus ….it's little Chinatown. So they can end up their English gets worse.*

DISCUSSION

Integration issues have been discussed in all previous sections, and there is little more to add except that the PVCs see integration with domestic students and the broader community as important, but difficult to achieve. Michael's was the only university to take responsibility for the issue through a student engagement strategy that fostered integration with the domestic cohort and also the broader community. Simon and Robert could outline the problems without proffering any solutions. Simon said it was his university's responsibility to facilitate students' studies but that did not extend to community integration. He and Michael disagree on this point. Michael saw the external integration programs his university fosters as having a direct benefit on the language progression of his university's students.

The question of making some activities compulsory was raised by Simon, who said he was unwilling to mandate integration in tutorials, saying that domestic students didn't want to work with overseas students for fear of losing marks. This was the same argument Ian, and to a lesser degree Sarah, used. It could well be that domestic students who react in this manner aren't being encouraged to see the benefits that working with students from overseas, developing intercultural understanding which in a future employment situation could benefit them significantly. As Bexley

et al. (2012) point out, communication skills are highly valued in the workplace; in an increasing multicultural society, domestic students could well benefit from learning to communicate with those from other cultures.

Simon's second point, that students fear losing marks by working with someone with lesser language skills, echoes Sarah's rationale for not compelling international and domestic students to work together. However it is a concern that could well be addressed through the adoption of different assessment criteria and marking, so that neither group feels at a disadvantage.

7.10 When enrolments fell; reasons and results

After the boom years which led to a peak in international student numbers in 2009, enrolments started to fall, a decline which the PVCs attributed to a number of factors, including changing government policy.

Simon said international enrolment numbers at his university had fallen by 5% in 2012, a position he described as 'disastrous'. He said internal factors were partly responsible; the university had for the previous two years refocused on quality – what he called a 'core quality agenda' to redress the approach of the past decade.

> *Because we want to clean it up. What we've done in the last ten years. In the last ten years, a lot of international operations were … factored in schools, without university plan, without university policy and people purely focused on money, and selling the program so cheaply, and take the students without meeting the standards, and we want to close up the loopholes and then ask the question, 'why do we need to do this?' … We really strengthened the entry requirements; we really strengthened financial models where we deliver offshore programs. … At the moment we are focused on quality. Hopefully that*

agenda will switch to quantity when infrastructure processes and procedures are … in good place, then we go forward.

The second impact, Simon said, was caused by numerous changes to government policy which affected universities' capacity to grow their international student numbers.

In the last two or three years a lot of regulations for international education are streamlined … everyone talks about quality at the moment. It's necessary. But how can we move forward for growth?

He also said new regulations relating to streamlined visa processing had imposed an additional administrative responsibility on universities, a responsibility which he said more correctly belonged with the (then) Department of Immigration and Citizenship. He said the regulatory environment wrongly put universities on the same level as private providers of education.

Universities are self-crediting. You know self-crediting institutions. … I don't mind that they have some regulations for private providers. They're different. They're companies, their objectives are different. They can close down. Universities can't close down. We don't want to close down. It's different values.

Robert cited a number of reasons for the decline in international student numbers, including the high Australian dollar and a loss of confidence triggered by frequent migration policy changes.

The Australian Government … made I think, … six changes probably in about 2010 … to the rules for international students, and one of them was that from certain countries, the amount of money you had to have in your bank account was trebled. Now, here you are, you are a family etcetera, you've planned the whole thing, and suddenly they say you know, three times as much. What are you going to do? Are you going to wait until, your

child's getting older and older, do you wait 'til you've got that money, or do you say, 'no thanks, I'll go to Canada.'

Robert said problems arose when the government stopped listening to the industry. As an example, he said the education industry had in the past warned the government that using education to solve skilled worker shortages would cause problems, and this subsequently occurred. A subsequent government turnaround to sever the education/immigration nexus then caused uncertainty, followed by a significant drop in enrolments.

The government was warned by the universities, 'this will play havoc' and the government didn't listen and then it did play havoc and then of course, as is always the case, the government blames the industry. And in fact it was the other way around. … It's now swung back the other way and … it's destroyed that confidence that you're talking about from the student point of view.

*Particular markets are particularly keen to migrate and when the government used the sledge hammer instead of a scalpel (*to address rorting by unscrupulous education providers) *it had a dramatic drop in some Indonesian, in Chinese, in Indian enrolments. … I've estimated the market, there are 20% of our market of international students want to migrate, so it's a large part of our market.*

DISCUSSION

There was some disagreement between the PVCs on the direction of government policy. However they were all in agreement on one point; that far too many changes had had a negative effect on the industry. Simon's view was that additional administrative requirements added a burden which more rightly should be carried by government agencies, a position consistent with University Australia's (UA) 2014-15 pre-budget submission, which claimed Australia's university sector is overly regulated, and carries an enormous cost and administrative burden. In describing the

existing regulatory and reporting regime as characterised by unchecked creep, duplication, fragmentation, inefficiency, and waste, UA estimates it costs $280 million annually to comply with Commonwealth and state government regulatory compliance and reporting requirements, money that should be directed to the core business of teaching, learning and research (UA, 2014).

All of the PVCs felt too many policy changes created uncertainty which encouraged the students to seek an education elsewhere. This is highly consistent with the views of the students in this study. For students who came with the expectation of being able to secure permanent residence when they finished their degrees, the changes were inequitable. Penny saw the issue from two sides, both as a student but also as an employee of a migration agent, seeing international students choosing Canada and the United States over Australia.

7.11 ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The systems of education in China and Australia and their impact on students' learning style were discussed by all of the other groups. However only one of the pro-vice chancellors (international) raised it as a consideration. Simon felt the approach to education in Australia generally suited Chinese students well.

> *I think generally Australian education is favourable to Asian students. There's a significant difference in the education system between Asian countries and Australian education. Australian education is based on equity. … easy access, and a favourable learning environment. In Asian countries, their education is purely based on examinations. Well that's natural because the demand is stronger than the supply … a lot of students purely study for exams and competing with each other for a place. This is not the culture and environment in Australia … we encourage everyone to excel in their own way and there's no such thing that, you know, we must get in the top 10%, things like that, you know. So*

this is very good. A lot of students who couldn't succeed in the Chinese education system, in the Asian education system, succeed very well in Australia.

The challenge is that in the Asian culture they are worried that … they could say something wrong, and they will be labelled by somebody else in the classroom as stupid. … Also they're worried that if they say something wrongly, in their mind … the academics may say, 'look you are not a good student'. … So they're worried … but gradually students realise that that's a part of learning, so they can change, but that takes time.

DISCUSSION

Sarah claimed that the Chinese students in her classes lacked motivation and application, but this was not Simon's view. He felt that once Chinese students adjusted to a Western style education, they adapted and did well. This is congruent with the experiences of the Chinese students in the study. All had some level of difficulty, which they overcame to complete their degrees and all valued their Australian education, and the exposure to ideas and the independence they gained from it, very highly.

7.12 CONCLUSION

In this final body chapter, the pro-vice chancellors international addressed issues which they felt were important to the experience of both international and domestic students. They discussed the philosophy they shared in terms of delivering a good educational experience to overseas students, and how that is constrained by chronic underfunding, which leads to lower entry standards and limits services to students and support for academics.

The next, and final chapter of this dissertation, will evaluate the input of the four groups of interviewees, in an attempt to address the research questions on which this study is based.

CHAPTER 8: COMING READY OR NOT

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

8.1 FINDINGS

The title of this dissertation, *Coming Ready or Not* relates to Chinese students who come to Australia for their education, but also applies equally to the universities which award their degrees, asking if they are ready and able to accommodate the large numbers of overseas students accepted into their institutions. After analysing data collected over nearly nine years with the students at the centre of this project, the incontrovertible conclusion is that they were not ready when they first came to Australia. After further analysis of the data collected in interviews with language advisers, academics and senior administrators, it is difficult not to conclude that the universities also were not ready.

The aim of this thesis was to understand why Chinese students come to Australia for tertiary education and how they manage their studies and their experiences along the way. My interest was triggered in 2005 in China, during discussions with a class I was teaching, about their future plans to go to Australia. I was aware that at that time their language proficiency was modest, and certainly not of a standard which I felt they would need to participate fully in an undergraduate degree. However, as they finished their foundation program they took IELTS tests, scoring between IELTS 5.0 and IELTS 6.0, and were duly offered places in Australian universities. This raised a further question in my mind about university entrance standards and how and why these students, none of whom met the entry threshold, had been offered places. Knowing these students as I did, I was apprehensive that they may not cope with the demands of tertiary study in a foreign environment, and this prompted the first major research question. 'What was the students' experience in studying in Australia's tertiary sector?' This question has been described comprehensively in Chapter 4, and will be summarised briefly in Section 8.2.

A supplementary question explored the students' motivation for coming, and the role permanent residence played. What emerged was that the students were motivated by their desire to experience a better life and education, and by their parents' ambitions for them. Permanent residence was a critical factor for all of them, and also will be discussed later in this section.

A second supplementary question asked, 'Was the students' language adequate to enable them to participate fully in tertiary study?' The answer most definitely is 'no.'

The language question turned out to be the most critical aspect of the study. Language proficiency was the hurdle on which all but one faltered, and on which one subsequently fell. All but Daisy acknowledged that their language wasn't adequate and from the moment they started their first course, they struggled to work around their language deficiencies. At least one student, the only one to fail a subject, finished her master's degree with the same language level she had when she started, IELTS 5.5. Another student couldn't meet the language threshold for migration and was left with no option but to return to China.

The literature isn't conclusive about whether an IELTS score can predict academic success. Nevertheless universities set language thresholds for a purpose, and that is to measure a student's capacity to understand the language of instruction. There was widespread agreement among the four groups of interviewees that students are being enrolled in undergraduate degrees at levels too low for them to manage their studies. The students in this case knew their language wasn't good enough, a language adviser says universities are 'killing kids' by enrolling them with low level language, and there's widespread frustration among the discipline academics as they deal with the fall-out from it. There was even discussion among PVCs about changing the structure of academic delivery, because they weren't confident international students could understand lectures. There was broad consensus that international students are being accepted into universities with language levels so low that many are forced to cheat to pass, and a view that academics are

compelled to 'soft mark' students' assessment to ensure their fail rate isn't overly high. Yet universities accept students through myriad pathway programs without knowing if they meet their language standards, which begs the question, 'Why set standards at all?' The PVC Michael says allowing standards to be bypassed is a function of a market-driven industry; if universities held fast to their entry thresholds, then students would simply go elsewhere. This may well be the case. However in these circumstances it is beholden on universities to introduce measures that will ensure students' language develops alongside their knowledge of their discipline. The two streams of learning need to occur concurrently. This is the thrust of the learning advisers' argument; that language development needs to be incorporated into teaching and learning. It is folly to teach students how to be accountants, for example, without giving them the language they need to practise their profession.

Another supplementary question asked the students how successful they'd been in integrating both into the academic environment and also in the broader Australian society. The answer to this is, 'barely at all'. For various reasons described in Chapter 4 they didn't mix to any significant degree with domestic students at university. Only one was able to make friends, and they, although Australian born, were of Chinese background.

Students who choose to study abroad are looking for a different experience (see for example Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Bodycott, 2009) which implies they want to engage with local people. That is what these students expected when they came here. Only one didn't attempt to integrate; the others tried a number of different strategies to make Australian friends. They moved out of Chinese share houses and into university accommodation, they chose to study hospitality so they could get exposure to English speakers, and took jobs to help them mix. It was to no avail.

A body of literature proposes that universities need to adopt an interventionist role to help international students adjust to the host country (Smart et al., 2000). However there was reluctance on the part of the discipline academics or the PVCs to mandate activities that brought the two cohorts together, despite integration being identified as important for domestic as well as international students. The academics at the university James attended had no such qualms; they gave the students joint activities and nominated students (international and domestic) as team leaders; from James's account, the students enjoyed and benefitted from it. Both Daisy and James, and also the language adviser Bryan identified a factor that is more problematic, and that is the effect of culture. As James said, '*Aussies love parties, but we have no idea what to do at parties*'. A number of universities have implemented integration strategies both embedded in teaching or social activities (Smart et al., 2000) and this was the case with some universities in this study. For example, Michael's university runs a program that has domestic and international students working alongside volunteer community groups; Professor Peter is trying to establish credit programs to give international students experience in the workplace. Both, they say, are showing promise.

Language proficiency plays a major role in integration, and strategies that address international students' language may over time lead to better interaction between students. However academics must also take a direct role in promoting to domestic students the benefits of developing their intercultural skills, and in developing assessment that rewards mixed group activities.

Another issue that comes under the 'integration' banner is student accommodation. The students in this study were placed in accommodation by their Chinese agents when they first came to Australia and every situation was unsuitable, ranging from being placed in a homestay with a non-English speaking background family, to being accommodated in a boarding house with a

dozen other students, with no attempt by the agent to introduce the occupants. This is probably beyond the remit of universities, but does give an indication of students' extreme loneliness when they arrive in Australia and why it is essential that they are given ongoing support. There isn't a simple solution to the problem of integration, but given its importance, universities need to continue to test, promote and fund integration strategies both on and off campus.

Before moving on to the broader academic environment, a brief discussion of students' motivation for coming to Australia is warranted. Along with their desire to escape their Chinese education and to gain an Australian degree, all the students in this study wanted to obtain permanent residence. Three of the five were successful; the other two are still trying to find their way back to Australia via their husbands who have enrolled in further education here. The students described migration policy changes that came into force after they had arrived in Australia as unfair, in that they had believed when they applied to come here, that migration would follow education. The pro-vice chancellors also raised the question of frequent migration changes, which they said had created uncertainty and had caused overseas student numbers to fall. The purpose of this thesis is not to evaluate Australia's migration policy. However it is valid to draw attention to the effects of frequency policy adjustment both on students and institutions.

The supplementary question that emerged from the discussion of the broader tertiary environment asked, 'What impact do large cohorts of international student have on Australia's tertiary environment?' It wasn't within the ambit of this research to examine the question from the perspective of domestic students; this could be a topic for further research. The only comment in regard to this cohort came from the discipline academics who anecdotally recounted that local students react badly to large numbers of international students in classrooms.

The question in terms of this study needs to be answered from the perspectives of the language advisers, academics and pro-vice chancellors. For the latter, overseas students bring much needed

revenue that helps to fund the delivery of education to domestic students. It also brings additional resourcing issues and challenges in internationalising curricula to be delivered by academics who don't necessarily have the required pedagogic skills. It also challenges the language advisers who, faced with an enormous task of redressing the language deficiencies of significant numbers of NESB students, believe discipline academics should share the responsibility. It is these discipline academics who seem to feel the most impact on a daily basis. While the language advisers expressed some frustration that they had insufficient resources to provide the language assistance the students need, the discipline academics spoke quite vehemently about international education being driven by the need for money, by falling academic standards, by too many students with low language levels that the academics don't feel able or willing to assist, and by the cheating and plagiarism that are rife, but difficult to prosecute.

What appears clear is that the discipline academics need support if they are going to rise to the challenge of teaching low English proficiency students. The PVCs in this study almost appeared to have written off older academics, saying they were too fixed in their ways, didn't want to change, they recycled old materials. Yet this wasn't Professor Peter's experience when he provided professional development; despite an initial reticence, the longer-term academics welcomed the opportunity to develop their pedagogy. The discipline academics believe that standards have fallen since the advent of international education as trade, which in itself is a serious indictment. That the same comment was made by a head of a large business school is even more confronting. Professor Peter addressed the soft marking issue through training and through giving his academics the confidence to fail students where necessary. However that was not the experience of the other discipline academics interviewed for this study, who felt pressured to artificially inflate pass rates.

Bexley et al.'s study (2012) found that as well as retirements, about a quarter of Australia's academic workforce intend to leave Higher Education in the next decade, an intention most frequently expressed by younger academics. The discipline academics in this study, and others who took part in Coates et al.'s (2009) and Bexley et al.'s research, expressed dismay at the changing academic environment. Bexley et al.'s study also found that the widespread dissatisfaction with the management and funding of higher education is partly offset by an almost unanimous passion for the scholarly aspects of academic work. Providing appropriate professional development and an environment where discipline academics and language advisers can work together in developing, delivering and assessing courses could help encourage this passion for working in academia.

8.2 CONCLUSION

In keeping with the grounded theory approach that I adopted for this project, a number of issues of importance to the protagonists emerged from their stories and accounts (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006) and I have emphasised their views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions and ideologies by using a constructivist approach (Creswell, 2008). In writing up these accounts, I have tended to offer discussion and possibilities, rather than definitive solutions. My reasons for this are two-fold. First, this is a deep but narrow account of what happened to a small number of Chinese students. Their stories are important because they describe their experiences over almost nine years, and discuss the lengths they were prepared to go to, to achieve their ambitions. But this isn't to say that these are the stories of all Chinese students in Australia. Similarly, the data garnered from language advisers, academics and pro-vice chancellors comes from their significant experience at 10 Australian universities. While they have provided rich accounts of their views, they cannot be seen as representative of the whole academic environment. The second reason for writing up the account as I have done is because of the very nature of the research

methodology I have chosen. The constructive grounded theory approach is meant to throw light on a topic of interest to protagonists and the researcher. It is not meant to be definitive. It is written to be more explanatory, more discursive and more probing of the assumptions and meanings for individuals in the study. The conclusions are more questioning of the data than conclusive (Creswell, 2008, pp.438-439).

Although each group of interviewees has seen international education from their own particular viewpoint, there is a remarkable consistency in the issues and impacts they have identified. While it is beyond the remit of this study, based as it is on the views of a limited number of people, to make specific recommendations for improvement, recent studies support their opinions, indicating perhaps that these issues are symptomatic of a wider malaise. On this basis, I feel it appropriate to offer more explicit suggestions on the three major and linked topics identified in the study, language proficiency, student integration, and academic support.

Language proficiency must be a priority for which students, language advisers and academics share responsibility. With pathway programs so deeply entrenched, and competition rife among institutions, asking universities to adhere to published entry standards is unlikely to meet with success. Therefore, post entry language assessment becomes critical, as does allocating resources to deal with the outcomes, and mandating participation by students identified as needing language support. Embedding language learning within faculties has become a catchcry, but as this study has identified, it isn't widely accepted within faculties or by academics. Universities are funding a considerable amount of language support which isn't being accessed. Perhaps it is time to redirect that support. The traditional role of the language adviser, delivering opt-in skills training and language assistance courses which are poorly-attended and don't reach the very students who need help needs to be rethought, with more language specialists working within faculties alongside discipline academics. Non-attendance at lectures and tutorials is another

matter identified by all groups, and one that also relates to students' language progression. It may be time for more universities to offer credit language courses, as some are already doing, and considering compulsory attendance at courses and tutorials, with marks allocated accordingly.

A second key issue was the capacity of discipline academics to take responsibility for language development. The strong message from the discipline academics' interviews is that they are drowning under their existing workload; in this situation, asking them to take responsibility for students' language progression understandably meets with resistance, particularly if they feel they lack the skills to do so. Relocating language advisers within faculties will help build those skills. However if universities accept that language progress and content knowledge should occur simultaneously, they are obliged to provide their academics with the necessary space and skills to undertake this expanded role.

Integration was the final major issue identified by all participant groups. Many universities are trialling programs that bring international students together with the domestic cohort or the broader community, with some success. A number of studies have looked at the benefits of integration on both international and domestic cohorts, but as the language adviser Catherine says, no university has cracked this nut yet. Further whole of sector research may be necessary to identify strategies that could achieve this.

In finishing, a final response to the major research questions will bring this thesis to a close.

The first question asked, 'What was the students' experience in studying in Australia's tertiary sector? This question has been answered more fully in Chapter 4. However to summarise, their experience was varied. Their language was inadequate for much of their studies, they didn't understand the culture, and they didn't make Australian friends. Yet despite some criticisms of their education, they all felt they had flourished in Australia, had become independent, much

more open in their thinking, and optimistic about their future. Each and every one judged their time in Australia a success.

The second research question, 'Can international education be better delivered to achieve a more rewarding experience for all participants?' has also been answered in considerable detail in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. A few additional comments are pertinent. A particularly alarming admission was made by a pro-vice chancellor that students at his university aren't IELTS tested after they finish pathway programs, because it could damage the provider, a public company listed on the Australian stock exchange. This is even more confronting when the same PVC acknowledges that international education is market driven, and his university accepts low language students because other institutions do the same. It is concerning to hear voiced by a PVC what has long been suspected; that commercial considerations are paramount in the industry that is international education. In these circumstances, the 'third wave' that is supposed to be the current iteration of international education sounds at best like a highly idealised concept. It is clear from the literature, and from the PVCs' comments in particular, that the situation is not going to change as long as universities rely so heavily on international student revenue and students with questionable language proficiency continue to use pathway programs to enter Australian universities. Therefore, the issue becomes more a matter of how universities address it, so that they and their academics accept responsibility for the language progression of their students throughout their degrees. The language advisers made the point that language progression is a joint responsibility. It is no longer acceptable to set an entry standard but allow students to flout it and then expect them to be responsible for their own language development (Marginson, in Arkoudis et al., 2012). The literature has identified numerous strategies to help low language students to progress, including a number that have emerged in this study. Accepting that pathway programs are a feature of Australia's academic environment should not mean that students can progress to graduation without progressing their language proficiency.

REFERENCE LIST

Aoji Education Group (n.d.). Retrieved October 14, 2009, from http://aojiedu.cn/index.shtml

Arkoudis, S. (2013). English language standards and allegations of soft-marking. In Marginson, S. (Ed.) *Tertiary education policy in Australia*. (pp. 123-129). Melbourne: CSHE.

Arkoudis, S., Baik, C., & Richardson, S. (2012). *English Language Standards in Higher Education. From entry to exit*. Camberwell, Victoria: Acer Press.

Arkoudis, S., & Tran, L.T. (2007). International Students in Australia: Read ten thousand volumes of books and walk ten thousand miles. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 27 (2), 157-158.

Arkoudis, S., & Tran, L. (2010). Writing Blah, Bah, Blah: Lecturers' Approaches and Challenges in Supporting International Students. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education,* 22(2), 169-178.

Association for Academic Language and Learning [AALL] (2013). Who are ALL advisers/lecturers? Retrieved June 30, 2013, from http://www.aall.org.au/who

Association for Academic Language and Learning [AALL] (n.d.). Degrees of Proficiency. Post-entry Language Assessment. Retrieved May 28, 2014, from http://www.degreesofproficiency.aall.org.au/post-entry-language-assessment

Atkinson, S., & Abu El Haj, M. (1996). Domain analysis for qualitative public health data. *Health Policy and Planning*. 11 (4) 438-442.

Austrade (2013). International Student Data. Retrieved December 4, 2013, from http://www.austrade.gov.au/Education/Student-Data/2013#.Up67EdIW2mZ

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011). What do international students study? Retrieved June 15, 2013, from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features20Dec+2011#WHAT [1]

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011). International Student Data. Monthly 2013 Summaries. Retrieved December 12, 2013 from http://www.austrade.gov.au/Education/Student-Data/2013 [2]

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012). Australian Social Trends. International Students. Retrieved November 19, 2013, from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features20Dec+2011

Australian Education International (2006). Research Snapshot. Enrolments, Commencements and student numbers. Explanatory Note. Retrieved December 16, 2013, from http://www.aei.gov.au/

Australian Education International (2007). Outcomes from a national symposium: English language competence of international students. Retrieved 28 February, 2014 from https://aei.gov.au/research/Publications/Documents/NS_Outcomes_Syposium.pdf

Australian Education International (2007). 2006 International Student Survey. Higher Education Summary Report. Retrieved January 30, 2014, from https://aei.gov.au/research/Publications/Documents/ISS_2006_HED.pdf [1]

Australian Education International (2010). 2010 International Student Survey. Retrieved December 14, 2013, from https://www.aei.gov.au/About-AEI/Current-Initiatives/InternationalStudentSurvey2010/Documents/2010_International_Student_Report.pdf

Australian Education International (2011). Export Income to Australia from Education Services in 2010-11. Retrieved September 8, 2012,from https://www.aei.gov.au/research/Research-Snapshots/Documents/Export%20Income%202010-11.pdf

Australian Education International (2012). End of Year Summary of International Student Enrolment Data – Australia – 2011. Retrieved November 19, 2013, https://aei.gov.au/research/International-Student-Data/Documents/Monthly%20summaries%20of%20international%20student%20enrolment%20data%202011/12_Dec_2011_MonthlySummary.pdf

Australian Education International (2013). Research Snapshot Export Income to Australia from international education activity in 2012-2013. Retrieved December 14, 2013 from https://aei.gov.au/research/Research-Snapshots/Documents/Export%20Income%202012.pdf [1]

Australian Education International (2013). End of Year Summary of International Student Enrolment Data – Australia – 2012. Retrieved November 19, 2013, from https://aei.gov.au/research/International-Student-Data/Documents/Monthly%20summaries%20of%20international%20student%20enrolment%20data%202012/12_December_2012_MonthlySummary.pdf [2]

Australian Education International (2013). Research Snapshot. International student enrolments by nationality in 2012. Retrieved November 19, 2013, from https://aei.gov.au/research/Research-Snapshots/Documents/Enrolments%20by%20Nationality%202012.pdf [3]

Australian Education International (2013). International Student Enrolments in Australia 1994–2012. Retrieved November 10, 2013, from https://aei.gov.au/research/International-Student-Data/Documents/INTERNATIONAL%20STUDENT%20DATA/2012/2012%20Time%20Series%20Graph.pdf [4]

Australian Education International (2013). International Student Survey Overview Report 2012. Retrieved November 11, 2013, from https://aei.gov.au/research/Publications/Documents/2012%20ISS%20Overview%20Report_PDF_Web%20version_FINAL.pdf [5]

Australian Education International (2013). Study Pathways of international students in Australia. (Research Paper 2013/02). Retrieved January 14, 2014, from https://aei.gov.au/research/archive/Research-Papers/Pages/default.aspx [6]

Australian Education International (2013). Research Snapshot. Onshore higher education international students as a proportion of all onshore students by university, 2012. Retrieved January 22, 2014, from https://aei.gov.au/research/Research-Snapshots/Documents/International%20students%20in%20Australian%20unis%202012.pdf [7]

Australian Education International (2013). AEI International Student Enrolment Data 2012. Retrieved December 4, 2013, from https://aei.gov.au/research/International-Student-Data/Documents/INTERNATIONAL%20STUDENT%20DATA/2012/2012Dec_0712.pdf (8)

Australian Education Network (n.d.). Student Numbers at Australian Universities. Retrieved December 17, 2013, from http://www.australianuniversities.com.au/directory/student-numbers/

Australian Qualifications Framework (n.d.). About the AQF. Retrieved August 18, 2012, from http://www.aqf.edu.au/

Australian Government (2013). Australia Awards. Retrieved December 9, 2013, from http://www.australiaawards.gov.au/content/annual-progress-report-2011/introduction.html

Australian Securities and Investment Corporation [ASIC] (n.d.). Regulatory Guide 146: Licensing: Training of financial product advisers (RG 146) Retrieved July 23, 2012, from http://www.asic.gov.au/asic/asic.nsf/byheadline/Regulatory+Guide+146%3A+Licensing%3A+Training+of+financial+product+advisers?openDocument

Australian Universities Quality Agency [AUQA] (2009). Good Practice Principles for English language proficiency for international students in Australian universities. Retrieved March 25, 2010 from www.auqa.edu.au

Baker, C. (1997). Membership Categorization and Interview Accounts. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative Research. Theory, Method and Practice*. (pp. 130-143). London: Sage.

Ballard, B., & Clanchy, J. (1984). *Study abroad: A manual for Asian students*. Kuala Lumpur: Longman.

Barrett-Lennard, S., Dunworth, K., & Harris, A. (2011). The Good Practice Principles: Silver bullet or starter gun? *Journal of Academic Language & Learning*. 5(2), A99-A106.

Barthel, A. (2007). Are tertiary students competent in English?' *Lingua Franca*, 24 February. Script retrieved November 25, 2013, from http://www.abc.net.au/rn/linguafranca/stories/2007//1854124.htm

Bass, M. (2005). The issue of permanent residency. *Campus Review*. 15 (47), 6.

Bass, M. (2007). The language of migration. The education industry versus the migration industry. *People and Place.* 15 (2), 49-60.

Baszanger, I., & Dodier, N. (1997). Ethnography: relating the part to the whole. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice. (*pp. 8-23). London: Sage.

Bennett, R.J., Volet, S.E., & Fozdar, F.E. (2013) "I'd say it's kind of unique in a way": The development of an intercultural student relationship. *Journal of Studies in International Education,* 17 (5). 533-553.

Benzie, H. (2011). A pathway into a degree program: Forging better links. *Journal of Academic Languag*e & *Learning*. 5(2), A107-A117.

Bexley, E., Arkoudis, S., & James, R. (2012). The motivations, values and future plans of Australian academics. *Higher Education.* 65. 385-400.

Birrell, B. (2006). Implications of low English standards among overseas students at Australian universities. *People and Place.* 14(4), 53-64.

Birrell, B. & Healy, E. (2008). Migrant Accountants – High Numbers, Poor Outcomes. *People and Place*, 16(4), 9-22.

Birrell, B. & Healy, E. (2010). The February 2010 reforms and the international student industry. *People and Place*, 18 (1), 65-80.

Birrell, B. & Perry, B. (2009). Immigration Policy Change and the International Student Industry. *People and Place*, 17(2), 64-80.

Bodycott, P. (2009). Choosing a higher education study abroad destination: What mainland Chinese parents and students rate as important. *Journal of Research in International Education.* 8(3), 349-373.

Bodycott, P., & Lai, A. (2012). The influence and implications of Chinese culture in the decision to undertake cross-border higher education. *Journal of Studies in International Education.* 16(3), 252-270.

Bretag, T. (2007), The Emperor's new clothes: Yes, there is a link between English language competence and academic standards. *People and Place*, 15 (1), 13-21.

Briguglio, C. (2011). Quality and the English Language Question: Is there really an issue in Australian universities? *Quality in Higher Education,* 17(3). 317-329.

Briguglio, C., & Smith, R. (2012). Perceptions of Chinese students in an Australian university: are we meeting their needs? *Asia Pacific Journal of Education,* 32:1, 17-33.

Burns, R.E. (1991). Study and Stress among First Year Overseas Students in an Australian University. *Higher Education Research and Development.* 10 (1). 61-77.

Campbell, N. (2012). Promoting Intercultural contact on campus: A project to connect and engage international and host students. *Journal of Studies in International Education.* 16(3), 205–227.

Chalmers, D., & Volet, S. (1997). Common Misconceptions about Students from South-East Asia Studying in Australia. *Higher Education Research & Development*. 16(1). 87-98.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical G*uide *through Qualitative Analysis*. London: Sage.

China Education and Research Network (n.d.). Education System in China. Retrieved June 18, 2012, from http://www.edu.cn/20041203/3123354.shtml

Coates, H. B., Dobson, I. R., Goedegebuure, L., & Meek, L. (2009). Australia's casual approach to its academic teaching workforce. *People and Place*, *17*(4), 47-54.

Connolly, S., & Olsen, A. (2012). Education as an Export for Australia: More Valuable than Gold, but for How Long? *Paper behind the presentation at the Australian International Education Conference in Melbourne.* 5 October.

Cotton, F., & Conrow, F. (1998). An investigation into the predictive validity of IELTS amongst a group of international students studying at the University of Tasmania. *IELTS Research Reports*, 1, 72-115. Canberra: IELTS Australia Pty Ltd.

Council of Australian Governments [COAG] (2010). International Students Strategy for Australia 2010-2014. Retrieved December 9, 2013, from http://www.coag.gov.au/node/307.

Craven, E. (2012). The quest for IELTS Band 7.0: Investigating English language proficiency development of international students at an Australian university. *IELTS Research Reports* 13, 3-61. IDP: Melbourne: IELTS Australia & Manchester: British Council.

Creswell, J.. W. (2008). *Educational Research. Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research (3rd ed.).* New Jersey: Pearson Education.

Dalglish, C. & Chan, A. (2005). Expectations and Reality – International Student Reflections on Studying in Australia. In *Proceedings Australian International Education Conference 2005*, Gold Coast, Australia.

Deloitte Access Economics (2011). Broader implications from a downturn in international students. *Report commissioned for Universities Australia*. Retrieved December 12, 2013, from http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/resources/618/1100

Department of Education Queensland (2008), Unilearn Foundation Program. Retrieved September 26, 2009 from http://www.education.qld.gov.au/marketing/eqi

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2012). *Trade at a Glance 2012*. Retrieved December 17, 2013, from http://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/trade/trade-at-a-glance-2012.html#p1

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2013). Trade at a Glance. Retrieved October 30, 2013, from http://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/trade/trade-at-a-glance-2013/trade_performance_at_a_glance/part03_australias_trade_and_economic_statistics.html

Department of Immigration and Border Protection (2013). *Fact Sheet 4 – More than 65 years of post-war Migration.* Retrieved December 12, 2013, from http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/04fifty.htm [1]

Department of Immigration and Border Protection (2013). Fact Sheet 8 – Abolition of the 'White Australia' Policy. Retrieved November 25, 2013, from http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/08abolition.htm

Department of Immigration and Border Protection (2013). Transitional: Is your Occupation in Demand? Retrieved November 23, 2013, from http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/general-skilled-migration/transitional/occupations-in-demand.htm#d

Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2010). Introduction of New Points Test. Retrieved June 30, 2012, from http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/general-skilled-migration/pdf/points-fact.pdf

Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2012). Skill Select. Retrieved November 12, 2012 from http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/general-skilled-migration/pdf/points-tested-migration-fact-sheet.pdf).

Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2013). Student visa program trends 2006-07 to 2012-13. Retrieved January 2, 2014, from http://www.immi.gov.au/media/statistics/study/ [1].

Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2013). Australia's Migration Trends 2011-12 at a glance. Retrieved January 2, 2014, from http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/australia-migration-trends-2011-12/index.htm [2]

Department of Industry (2013). 2012 Full Year Student Summary. Retrieved February 4, 2014, from http://www.innovation.gov.au/HigherEducation/HigherEducationStatistics/StatisticsPublications/Pages/default.aspx

Dobson, I.R. (1998). Overseas students in Australian higher education: Trends to 1996. *People and Place*, 5(1), 24-29.

Dooey, P. (2010). Students' perspectives of an EAP pathway program. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 9, 184–197.

Dooey, P., & Oliver, R. (2002). An investigation into the predictive validity of the IELTS Test as an indicator of future academic success. *PROSPECT.* 17(1), 36-54.

Dunstan, P. (2009). Social inclusion and integration. *Campus Review*. Retrieved August 23, 2009, from http://www.campusreview.com.au/pages/section/article.php?s=Comment&dArticle=7226

Dunworth, K. (2009). Post-entry English language assessment in Australian universities. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning. 3*(1), A1-A13.

Education Queensland International (2012). Unilearn Foundation Program. Retrieved January 3, 2013, from http://www.eqi.com.au/corporate/unilearn.html

Elder, C., & O'Loughlin, K. (2003). Investigating the relationship between intensive English language study and band score gain on IELTS. *IELTS Research Reports.* 4. 62-87. Canberra: IELTS Australia.

Feast, V. (2002). The impact of IELTS scores on performance at university. *International Education Journal,* 3, 70-85.

Fildes, L., Cunnington, C., & Quaglio, M. (2010). Staying the Course: The importance of social and structural networks for NESB students achieving positive outcomes at a regional campus. *Journal of Academic Language and Learning.* 4(1). A24-A40.

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2000). The Interview. From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text. In Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research (*2nd ed.) (pp 645-672). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Foster, G. (2011). The Impact of International and NESB students on Measured Learning and Standards in Australian Higher Education. Australian School of Business. University of New South Wales. 1-21.

Fox, J. (2004). Test decisions over time: Tracking validity. *Language Testing,* 21. pp.437-465.

Glaser, N., Hall, R., & Halperin, S. (2006). Students supporting students: The effects of peer mentoring on the experiences of first year university students. *Journal of Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association,* 27, 4-19.

Green, A. (2004). Making the grade: score gains on the IELTS writing test' in *Research Notes*, 16, University of Cambridge ESOL examinations, 9-13

Green, A. (2005). EAP recommendations and score gains on the IELTS Academic Writing test. *Assessing Writing*, 10, 44-60.

Griffith University (2011). Direct Entry Program. Retrieved November 14, 2011, from http://www144.griffith.edu.au/en/english-programs/dep

Group of Eight (2011). Submission to the Review of Higher Education Base Funding. Retrieved December 2, 2013, from www.go8.edu.au

Gresham, R., & Clayton, V. (2011). Community Connections: A Programme to Enhance Domestic and International Students' Educational Experience. *Journal Of Higher Education Policy And Management*, *33*(4), 363-374.

Gubrium, J., & Holstein, J. (1997). *The New Language of Qualitative Method.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Hall, R. (2008). *Applied Social Research. Planning designing and conducting real-world research*. South Yarra: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography. Principles in Practice. (1st ed).* London: Routledge.

Harris, A., & Ashton, J. (2011). Embedding and integrating language and academic skills: An innovative approach. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning.* 5(2). A73-A87.

Hill, K., Storch, N., & Lynch, B. (1999). A comparison of IELTS and TOEFL as predictors of academic success. IELTS Research Reports 2, 53-63. Canberra: IELTS Australia.

Hirsh, D. (2007). English language, academic support and academic outcomes. *University of Sydney Papers in TESOL*, 2(2), 193-211.

Holmes Institute (2010), Study Local, Apply Globally. Retrieved November 12, 2011, from http://www.holmes.edu.au/about-holmes/Indroduction

Holstein, J.A., & Gubrium, J.F. (2005). *The Active Interview.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Humphreys, P., Haugh, M., Fenton-Smith, B., Lobo, A. Michael, R., & Walkinshaw, I. (2012). Tracking international students' English proficiency over the first semester of undergraduate study. IELTS Research Reports. Series 1. 1-39.

Humphreys, P. & Mousavi, A. (2010). Exit testing: A Whole-of-University Approach. *Language Education in Asia.* 1(1), 8-22.

IELTS (2006). IELTS Handbook. Retrieved January 04, 2014, from http://www.britishcouncil.org/tw/tw-exams-ielts-handbook.pdf

IELTS (2013). IELTS scores explained. Retrieved January 05, 2014, from http://www.ielts.org/institutions/test_format_and_results/ielts_scores_explained.aspx

Ingram, D. & Bayliss, A. (2007). IELTS as a predictor of academic language performance, Part 1. *IELTS Research Reports*. 7. 1-68. Canberra. IELTS Australia Ltd.

International College of Management [ICM] (n.d.). Retrieved March 21, 2011, from http://www.icms.edu.au/about-us/who-we-are.html

International Education Advisory Council [IEAC] (2013). Australia. Education Globally. Advice from the International Education Advisory Council. Retrieved November 20, 2013, from https://aei.gov.au/IEAC2/theCouncilsReport/Documents/Australia%20%E2%80%93%20Educating%20Globally%20FINAL%20REPORT.pdf

International Education Association of Australia (2013). Good Practice Principles in Practice: Teaching Across Cultures. A Quick Guide to Effective Development of Teachers.

James, R., Krause, K. L., & Jennings, C. (2010). The first year experience in Australian universities. Canberra: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR].

Kell, P., & Vogl, G. (2008). Perspectives on mobility, migration and well-being of international students in the Asia-Pacific. *International Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies.* 4(1), 21-31.

Kennelly, R., Maldoni, A., & Davies, D. (2010). A case study: Do discipline-based programmes improve student learning outcomes? *International Journal for Educational Integrity.* 6(1). 61-73.

Kerstjens, M., & Nery, C. (2000). Predictive validity in the IELTS test. *IELTS Research Reports*, 3. Canberra: IELTS Australia Pty Ltd.

Kingston, E., & Forland, H. (2008). Bridging the gap in the expectations between international students and academic staff. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 12(2), 204-221.

Lane, B. (2013). Overseas students overtake the locals. *The Australian. Higher Education.* October 16. Retrieved February 11th, 2014, from http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/overseas-students-overtake-the-locals/story-e6frgcjx-1226740542675

Love, K., & Arkoudis, S. (2006). Teachers' stances towards Chinese international students: An Australian case study. *Linguistics and Education.* 17 (3).

Macquarie University (n.d.) English Language Requirements. Retrieved June 12, 2011, from http://www.international.mq.edu.au/applications/apply/english

Mahat, M., & Hourigan, C. (2007). International student experience: What it is, what it means and why it matters? *Paper presented at the Australasian Association for Institutional Research Conference, November, Sydney, NSW*. Retrieved July 8, 2009, from http://www.aair.org.au/2006Papers/Mahat.pdfMahat and Hourigan

Marginson, S. (2007). Global position and position taking. *Journal of Studies in International Education,* 11(1), 5-32.

Marginson, S. (2012). Foreword. In Arkoudis, S., Baik, C., & Richardson S. *English Language Standards in Higher Education. From entry to exit.* Camberwell, Victoria: Acer Press. Iii-vi.

Mazzarol, T. (2001) "Push-Pull Factors Influencing International Student Destination Choice". *CEMI Discussion Paper Series, DP 0105*, Centre for Entrepreneurial Management and Innovation, Retrieved January 26, 2014, from www.cemi.com.au

Mazzarol, T., & Soutar, G.N. (2002). "Push-pull" factors influencing international student destination choice. *International Journal of Education Management*. 16(2), 82-90.

McMahon, M. E. (1992). Higher Education in a World Market. An Historical Look at the Global Context of International Study. *Higher Education*. 24(4), 465-482.

Migration Heritage Centre (2013). Australia's migration history timeline. Accessed December 14, 2012 from http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au

Mills, J., Bonner, A., & Francis, K. (2006). The Development of Constructivist Grounded Theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 5 (1). 1-10.

Miller, J., & Glassner, B. (1997). The 'Inside' and the 'Outside'. Finding Realities in Interviews. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice, (pp.*99-112). London: Sage.

Monash University (2013). Monash Alumni. Retrieved October 14, 2013, from http://www.monash.edu.au/indonesia/english/alumni/).

Murray, D., & O'Loughlin, K. (2007). Pathways – preparation and selection. *A discussion paper prepared for the National Symposium: English Language Competence of International Students*, Sydney, August, 2007.

.

Navitas (n.d.). SIBT. Retrieved October 17, 2011, from http://www.navitas.com/study_university_aus_sib.html

O'Loughlin, K. (2008). The use of IELTS for university selection in Australia: A case study. *IELTS Research Reports*. 8. 1-98. Canberra: IELTS Australia Pty Ltd.

O'Loughlin, K., & Arkoudis, S., (2009). Investigating IELTS exit score gains in higher education. *IELTS Research Reports*. 10. 1-86. Canberra: IELTS Australia Pty Ltd.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [0ECD] (2011). Education at a Glance 2011: OECD Indicators. Who studies abroad and where? Retrieved November 19, 2013*, from* http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/61/32/48631079.pdf

O'Reilly, K. (2012). *Ethnographic Methods* (2nd ed.). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Owens, A. R., & Loomes, S. L. (2010). Managing and resourcing a program of social integration initiatives for international university students: What are the benefits? *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 32*(3), 275-290.

Parliament of Singapore (2012). http://www.parliament.gov.sg/mp/mah-bow-tan?viewcv=Mah Bow Tan. Accessed October 21, 2012, from . http://www.cabinet.gov.sg/content/cabinet/appointments/mr_khaw_boon_wan.html

Parliament of Singapore (2014). List of Current MPs. Retrieved January 19, 2014, from http://www.parliament.gov.sg.

Peat, M., Dalziel, J., & Grant, A. M. (2001). Enhancing the first year student experience by facilitating the development of peer networks through a one-day workshop. *Higher Education Research & Development,* 20, 199-215.

Phakiti, A., Hirsh, D., & Woodrow, L. (2013). It's not only English: Effects of other individual factors on English language learning and academic learning of ESL international students in Australia. *Journal of Research in International Education.* 12(3), 239-258.

Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment (n.d.). Unilearn Foundation Program, retrieved January 24, 2014 from http://unilearn.edu.au/delivery_partners/index.html

Ramsay, S., Barker, M., & Jones, E. (1999). Academic Adjustment and Learning Processes: a comparison of international and local students in first-year university. *Higher Education Research & Development.* 18:1, 129-144.

Read, J. (2008). Identifying academic needs through diagnostic assessment. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 3: 180-190.

Reserve Bank of Australia [RBA] (2008). Australia's Exports of Education Services. Retrieved November 19, 2013, from http://www.rba.gov.au/publications/bulletin/2008/jun/pdf/bu-0608-2.pdf

Rimon, W (2006). *The Companion to Tasmanian History*. Ed. Alison Alexander. Tasmania: Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, University of Tasmania.

Robertson, M., Line, M., Jones, S., & Thomas, S. (2000). International Students, Learning Environments and Perceptions: a case study using the Delphi technique. *Higher Education Research and Development.* 19(1), 89-102.

Robinson, R.A. & Bornholt, L.J. (2007). Pathways theory of progression through higher education. *Australian Journal of Educational & Developmental Psychology*. 7, 49-62.

Ryan, G.W., & Bernard, H.R. (2000.) Data Management and Analysis Methods. In Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research (*2nd ed.) (pp. 769-802). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sawir, E. (2008). International students and the English language: How can we move forward? *Campus Review, 18*(4), 9–14.

Sawir, E. (2013). International Students and Internationalisation of Higher Education. *Journal of International Students*. 3 (1) iii-iv.

Sawir, E., Marginson, S., Deumert, A., Nyland, C., & Ramia, G. (2008). Loneliness and international students – an Australian study. *Journal of Studies in International Education,* 12 (2), 148-180.

Silverman, David (2001). *Interpreting Qualitative Data. Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction. (*2nd ed.*)* London: Sage.

Skyrme, G. (2010). Is this a stupid question? International undergraduate students seeking help from teacher during office hours. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes,* 9, 211-221.

Smart, D., Volet, S., & Ang, G. (2000). Fostering Social Cohesion in Universities: Bridging the Cultural Divide. Canberra: Australian Education International, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

Spradley, J. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. Orlando: Hold, Reinhart, Winston.

Stratilas, K. (2011). The evolving nature of support: A new horizon. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning.* 5(2), A44-A49.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research. Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Sydney Institute of Business & Technology (n.d.). About Us. Retrieved July 14, 2010, from (http://www.sibt.nsw.edu.au/about-sibt),

Tedlock, B. (2000). Ethnography and Ethnographic Representation. In Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research (*2nd ed.) (pp. 455-486). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Terraschke, A., & Wahid R. (2011). The impact of EAP study on the academic experiences of international postgraduate students in Australia. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes.* 10, 173–182.

Tesch, R. (1990). *Qualitative research: analysis types and software tools*. London: Routledge Farmer.

Universities Australia (2009). Education Stronger as Australia's Third Largest Export. Media release issued February. Retrieved December 5, 2013, from http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/resources/38/13

Universities Australia (2010). Policy and Advocacy. International. Retrieved November 09, 2013, from http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/page/policy---advocacy/international/

Universities Australia (2011). Submissions and Reports. Retrieved December 22, 2013, from (http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au

Universities Australia (2014). Pre-Budget Submission 2014-2015. January 2014. Retrieved from http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/resources/895/1723667

University of Melbourne (2011). Submission to the Higher Education Base Funding Review. Retrieved December 12, 2013, from http://www.unimelb.edu.au/publications/docs/uom-base-funding-submission-2011.pdf

University of Melbourne (2013). Retrieved October 23, 2013, from http://alumni.unimelb.edu.au/

University of New England (n.d.). Master of Business. Why study the Master of Business at UNE? Retrieved June 12, 2012, from https://my.une.edu.au/courses/2010/courses/MBUS

Walters, C. (2011). International students—returning their investment. Australia's reform program for international education. *Going Global 2011.* Paper tabled at Going Global Conference, Hong Kong.

Wesley, M. (2009). Australia's Poisoned Alumni: International Education and the Costs to Australia. Sydney, Australia: Lowry Institute for International Policy.

Willis, J. W. (2007). *Foundations of qualitative research: Interpretive and critical approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Wingate, U. (2006). Doing away with study skills. *Teaching in Higher Education, 11*(4), 457-469.

Yang, M. (2007). What attracts mainland Chinese students to Australian higher education. *Studies in Learning, Evaluation, Innovation and Development.* 4(2), 1-12.