# Literature review

**Proposed title:**

Background, functions and concerns of academic staff involved in teaching offshore programmes at Curtin University of Technology in Perth, Western Australia.

**Issue:**

International education and within it offshore education has become important business for Australian Universities. In order to provide a quality educational experience to offshore students the functions and concerns of academic staff involved need to seriously be taken into consideration.

**Purpose of this study**

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of internationalisation in the Australian university sector and within that of the area of offshore education. There have been various kinds of studies done in the area, however particular value can also be gained from in-depth qualitative studies of single institutions. Hence the focus of this study is Curtin University of Technology. The aim of the study is to focus on three interrelated questions:

- *The first aim is to develop an understanding of the background to the provision of offshore education to international students of Curtin University in Western Australia;*
- *The second aim is to develop an understanding of the functions of academic staff at Curtin University who provide services to offshore students of Curtin University;*
- *The third aim is to develop an understanding of the concerns of Curtin University academic staff who have responsibilities in providing services to international students studying offshore.*

The intentions of this study are twofold. The first intention is to contribute to the development of theory in the wider field of international higher education. The second intention is to produce findings which have a practical relevance to the improvement of the experience of academic staff involved in offshore education at Curtin University. It is also hoped that the findings of this study will eventually be applicable to other universities. The first research aim is based on the recognition of the fact that the past has an impact on the present and needs to be continually kept in mind when dealing with recent issues (Aldrich, 1996). The second aim recognises that the functions performed by various people dealing with the offshore students of Curtin University often extend beyond their job descriptions. In addition it recognises that some duties outlined in their job descriptions might not get carried out. Keeping in mind the first two aims the third aim can be fully developed and the concerns of the various staff understood.

The area of international student education has invited a lot of research in the past two decades as the international activities of universities dramatically expanded in volume, scope and complexity. Internalisation now enjoys a ubiquitous state in Australian higher education. The internationalisation of higher education is a process "of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution" (Knight & de Wit, 1997, p. 8).

In order to understand the literature on international student education and within that the area of offshore education, and to gain a full understanding to the background and issues surrounding this area, the conceptual, contextual and empirical approaches in the literature need to be investigated. In addition it is expected that a critical review might reveal gaps in the literature which will point to possible new areas of investigation.

## Review of the conceptual literature

In order to gain an insight into the area of offshore education it is important to first search the literature on the internationalisation of higher education as the concepts pertaining to that area also underpin the area of offshore education. Thus the concepts of *internationalisation and globalisation* need to be defined and their effects on

higher education investigated. Some of those affects are well represented in the literature for example in the form of various international agreements which determine relationships, and rules and regulations of trade in the business of international education. It is also prudent to find the common terms and meanings used in the literature to describe the field of offshore education and to see the similarities and differences in these concepts: i.e. *offshore, transnational, cross-border and borderless education.*

Globalisation, combined with rapid population growth, has had a huge influence on the worldwide increase in demand for education. Around the world more and more people are choosing to enrol in international educational programs. The internationalisation of education is at once a cause and an effect of increasingly mobile investment capital and the rapid growth of communications. Rapid economic expansion in Asia has been the most important cause of the growth of trade in education in the past 25 years. Thus internationalisation in a global education market has become a major trend since the 1980's. The commercialisation of higher education as an export is a more recent development in Australian higher education (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2003).

The emergence of a global higher education market reflects several issues: the economic growth of the Asia Pacific region, the lack of capacity in domestic higher education to cater to the demand, and the demand for skills and knowledge in developing countries to match increased investment in service industries. The continued expansion of English as the global lingua franca of business, politics, popular culture and academic research has also contributed to the globalisation of education. In the 21$^{st}$ century English is the language for communicating worldwide, the medium of almost all of the international scientific journals and it also dominates other academic fields. The role of English affects higher education policy and the work of students and academics (Altbach, 2004; Yang, 2002). In addition the spread of communication technology and the Internet have gone hand in hand with globalisation. The Internet has become the primary vehicle for globalisation of knowledge and communications. It simplifies the access to knowledge and information for scholars and scientists even if their institutions lack good libraries.

**Globalisation and internationalisation**

The terms of globalisation and internationalisation are sometimes used interchangeably and also different interpretations exist in the literature. Yang (2002) argues that *globalisation* is fundamentally an economic process of integration which transcends national borders and ultimately affects the flow of knowledge, people, values and ideas. This kind of globalisation influences universities over the world through market competition and has reshaped universities and other social institutions. Altbach (2004) adds that apart from the economic process globalisation involves the technological and scientific trends, policies and culture which directly affect higher education. Evidence of globalisation within universities consists of commercialisation within international programs and activities, particularly of 'academic capitalism, commodification and marketisation' (Welch, 2002). Globalisation has also been termed as the process of a worldwide flow of people, technology, economy, ideas, knowledge and culture without a focus on the actual relationships between countries (Knight, 2005).

Universities have always figured in the global environment so this is not a 21st century phenomenon. From their beginnings they have presented global institutions: they functioned in a common language and served an international clientele of students. Most of the universities today have stemmed from the medieval western universities. In non-western countries university models were either introduced by the colonisers, or were freely adopted in non-colonised countries (Altbach, 2004). In terms of globalisation universities have always been placed between national and international realities, trends and innovations.

The term *internationalisation* covers various perspectives including the academic and extracurricular activities such as curriculum development, the exchange of students and scholars, intercultural training and joint research activities and stresses the idea of relations between nations and cultures (Leask, 2004; Knight, 2005). Most researchers agree that for universities internationalisation means the process of integrating international dimensions into teaching, research and service, and an awareness and interaction within and between cultures through teaching, research and service functions. Its ultimate aim is the reaching of a mutual understanding between cultures

and across borders and is based on mutual respect for difference and social justice (Yang, 2002; Welch, 2002). Internationalisation also includes specific policies and programmes undertaken by academic institutions in order to cope with the effects of globalisation. This international dimension is very important in order for universities to avoid parochialism in scholarship and research and to encourage critical thinking about issues that influence the relationship amongst nations, regions and interest groups. With the help of globalisation universities have the chance and the responsibility to increase awareness and understanding of the multiple new and changing phenomena that affect the political, economic and cultural developments amongst nations (Yang, 2002). In addition universities have a central role in global knowledge economies, research and communication.

In Australia internationalisation can be regarded as an intersection between intellectual capital, multiculturalism and financial opportunism. Education was Australia's fourth largest export in 2004 (DFAT, 2005) worth A$5.9 billion to the economy. In 2004 higher education accounted for almost 70 percent of a total of A$3.4 billion earned in fees from international education by Australian institutions. Today Australia is the third largest commercial exporter of higher education services internationally behind the United States and Great Britain (Welch, 2002; Marginson, 2006a,b). Australia has achieved the policy objectives defined at the outset of commercialisation in the late 1980's- it has provided the government with financial relief, and universities with a growing source of income, while establishing a major export industry which helps relieve the balance of trade (Considine et al, 2001).

Australian universities have become highly dependent on revenues from foreign students to subsidise their income. Government cutback to public funding in recent years has driven the expansion of foreign student enrolments. This cutback has meant that the funding base has been transformed as universities have lost funding from both teaching and learning, and also from research infrastructure. Cost pressures at Australian universities have seen declining staff and student ratios, the substitution of tenure with contract and sessional staff, the growth of managerialism with growth of academic staff resentment and declining morale amongst many staff members (Welch, 2002) The underlying assumption behind the cuts was that market mechanisms in higher education introduces competition within and between

institutions and this leads to greater efficiency and effectiveness. These developments are already leading to pressures for 'commodification', which refers to the development of university activities such as teaching and research within the framework of a market economy. Rather than being valued for their intrinsic academic value, educational processes and products become valued for their 'exchange' value. Rather than evaluating the success of an institution on the basis of its contribution to knowledge, its publications and commitment to the intellectual development of students, universities are evaluated on the basis of research income generated and student numbers. As a result the measurement of success has shifted from academic to financial criteria. Thus, the primary rationale for the development of educational activities becomes the generation of income (Bourdieu, 1996; Naidoo, 2007). Several universities have included in their annual plans the importance of this revenue generation. For example Monash University 's 1999 annual plan states that 'Income generation and entrepreneurial activity is, unashamedly, an important aspect of the work of the University' and the university must be 'disciplined enough to apply rigorous business tests along with rigorous academic tests to each proposal' for course delivery (McBurnie & Pollock, 2000).

One of the consequences of commodification is the pressure to standardise and develop products that are more easily transferable across borders. This might lead to the development of two separate models in higher education: a high quality and high cost model available to the elite, and a standardised, low cost model for the majority. Cost reduction can be achieved by focusing on scale rather than on quality or relevance. Some solutions to cost cutting might be the reliance on learning resources which simply provide information and the 'teacher proof' delivery of teaching materials if institutions attempt to use less qualified, experienced and hence cheaper staff. Since commodification leads to the stripping away of those elements which are strictly not necessary, there is likely to be little investment in facilities like libraries or social facilities which would promote interaction (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2004; Naidoo 2007).

These financial and academic developments are already influencing the rationales for universities entering into offshore agreements (Naidoo, 2007). Some researchers claim that Australia has traded more on the basis of its universities' business model

rather than their academic achievements, let alone a real internationalisation of the curriculum. Australian university programs are vigorously marketed not merely in the Asia-Pacific region but in many areas of the world. It has also been noted that some of the marketing glosses over awkward issues of declining resource levels and may promise more than can be delivered. Some researchers have found that despite the rhetoric of internationalisation, when closely inspected, most of the curriculum and pedagogy is largely unchanged and are insufficiently adapted to the needs of international students. For example foreign and local students do not mix much and local students do not travel abroad -or if they do they mainly chose English speaking countries (Welch, 2002; Marginson, 2006a)

**International agreements**

The new era of globalisation of higher education is characterised by new *international agreements* and arrangements to manage global interactions. These agreements between countries range from bilateral agreements of students and academic exchanges to the mutual recognition of degrees. One of the most comprehensive agreements is that of the European Union's: the Bologna process which was designed to harmonise the higher education system of the EU member state. In 2001 the World Trade Organisation (WTO) launched a new round of multilateral trade negotiations which included higher education and knowledge industries. The WTO now has 145 signatories and it forms a new context for cultural and academic exchanges. Under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) WTO member countries are able to request that other members provide free market access to their education sectors and address specific restrictions in trade in education services. Governments can also undertake not to discriminate between domestic and foreign service providers, that is, to 'extend national treatment' to those. Thus the idea behind GATS is that education and knowledge are commodities just like others and should be freely traded. This 'instrument of global governance' is likely to apply even greater pressure on governments to treat higher education as a commodity which can be invested in by private and foreign providers on a global scale (Robertson et al, 2002; Ziguras, 2003; Naidoo, 2007).

This liberalisation of trade services is enabling Australian institutions to meet the growing demand for international education, both in Australia and overseas. Trade negotiations seek to address two related issues that affect trade in education: quality assurance for courses and the mutual recognition of academic qualifications between countries. The mutual recognition of academic qualifications and the ability to transfer credit earned abroad plays an important role in the attractiveness of international education and of individual institutions. Foreign providers can help alleviate pressures for access in countries where there is limited domestic capacity to meet growing demand and also are able to respond to the short tem needs of a government and industry within the domestic sector. GATS and related arrangements also seek to provide a legally binding framework for the circulation of educational services and for the protection of intellectual property. Thus GATS and the WTO are related to Trade Related Intellectual Property (TRIPS) arrangements and copyright regulations (DFAT, 2005; Altbach, 2004; Naidoo, 2007).

Australian education exporters have a vested interest in the future of GATS and trade liberalisation. First, institutions wanting to expand their international student base will need to look offshore for expansion, as some universities are reaching a physical limit on the number of international students they can comfortably welcome on campus. Second, it is highly likely that competition for overseas students is going to intensify, especially as some of the traditional education importers are aiming to become exporters of high quality education. Examples of this trend are Singapore and Malaysia, who have declared their intention of becoming net exporters and education hubs for their region. Third, GATS helps lower the risk for exporting institutions and enables them to plan more effectively (McBurnie, 2003). The possible liberalisation introduced by GATS can assist long term planning by having transparency of approval processes, consistent application rules, and are relevant to the problems of who can teach, what disciplines can be taught, what delivery methods can be used, and in what way do people and money cross borders.

There are many facets of the globalisation of higher education. However, there are some common perspectives and motivations for both the partners involved. The central goal of all the stakeholders is to earn a profit while some might also be interested in providing places for the growing number of students trying to get into

higher education and in providing new degrees which might not be available at home institutions. It is claimed by various scholars that these arrangements are inevitably marked by inequality especially between developed and developing countries (Altbach, 2004, Yang, 2002; Ziguras, 2004; Raikhy, 2002). The international treaties mentioned before are supported by legal enforcement regimes. These arrangements were created to protect the sellers and providers and not the buyers and users. Developing countries represent the major markets that sellers and providers are eager to target, and as these developing countries have few educational products to export, they could be at the mercy of the multinational providers. As a result the treaties can have some unfavourable affects on developing countries (Raikhy, 2002). It is claimed that while GATS would bring developing countries into the global framework of commerce in higher education, it would remove some important aspects of autonomy from their decision making ability. At the moment developing countries are the main importers of products and services from abroad and while these countries rely on offshore tertiary education to meet labour market needs, nation-building governments often see education as a form of culturally subversive western domination. All of the institutional cooperations link a more powerful to a less powerful ally. When institutions or initiatives are exported from one country to another, academic models, curricula and programmes from the more powerful partner dominate (Altbach, 2004). Another consequence of the rise of market-oriented transnational provision is the probability that private investment in education will rise whilst public funding, especially in relation to developmental aid, will fall. It may also lead to a shift in thinking on international development strategies and may erode the political will to offer aid to developing countries (Ziguras, 2004).

Nonetheless current arrangements do permit a great deal of international higher education exchange and cross-border educational transactions are actively pursued worldwide. Further negotiations in the WTO and the signing of various bilateral free trade agreements in addition to the recognition for need for quality assurance and mutual recognition frameworks will have great effect on the expansion of international education. Further research needs to be carried out on the role of external agents in the development of higher education in developing countries. Also critical analysis need to be carried out of the extent to which higher education policy is influenced by dominant countries and organisations and the impact of such policies on

capacity building in higher education (Naidoo, 2007). The challenge for the countries involved is to recognise the complexities of the context of globalisation and to create a global academic environment which recognises the importance for equal academic relationships (Altbach, 2004; DFAT, 2005).

**Terminology of offshore education**

In the new era of international academic mobility not only the students, scholars and programs move around the world, but different kinds of providers of education, including private companies, traditional academic institutions and professional associations are also taking various programs to students in their own home countries. As a result of this mobility, new terms have been introduced into the lexicon of the literature on higher education (Knight, 2005). Offshore education provides students with the opportunity to earn foreign degrees without the need to leave their home countries and also expands human resource development opportunities for governments and employers (McBurnie & Pollock, 2000).

It is important to find common meanings for the same and similar terms used in the literature. It is important to concentrate on the commonalities so that when policy and regulations are being established at local, national and international levels, there is clarity on the meaning of the terms and their implications. Thus it is important to clarify the meaning of various terms found in the literature which refer to the phenomenon of international academic mobility. The terms *offshore, borderless, cross-border and transnational education* are used in the literature, sometimes interchangeably. In order to gain reliable data on the volume, type, destination, impact and trends related to the transfer of educational services across borders and in order to develop international, national and local regulatory frameworks and analysis, the various terms and their key and common elements need to be understood (Altbach, 2004).

When talking about the internationalisation of education, the emergence of the concept of multinationalisation of education needs to be discussed (Altbach, 2004). This is defined as the process of academic programmes or institutions from one country being offered in other countries. These are programmes which can come in

various shapes and forms from twinning arrangements through franchising (referred to as "McDonaldisation") and on-line education to the opening of branch campuses (Hayes & Wynyard, 2002). There are two common themes in these definitions: the concept of crossing borders and the fact that the learner is in a different country from the awarding institution (Knight, 2005, 10). Australia was one of the first countries to use the term *transnational education* to differentiate between international students studying in Australia and those studying degrees offshore. Hence the term transnational education was used to describe offshore enrolments of international students regardless of the mode and arrangements of their studies. In 1995 The Global Alliance for Transnational Education (GATE) was established to help enhance good practices in transnational education and to offer certification services. It developed the following definition:

> Transnational education....denotes any teaching or learning activity in which the students are in a different country (the host country) to that in which the institution providing the education is based (the home country). This situation requires that national boundaries be crossed by information about the education, and by staff and/or education materials (GATE, 1997).

This definition emphasises the location of the institution providing the education and the fact that borders are crossed.

UNESCO and the Council of Europe (2001) described transnational education as

> All types of modes and delivery of higher education study programmes, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based.

This definition though similar to that of GATE's introduces modes of delivery and states that the learner is in a different country from that of the awarding institution. Thus the awarding institution becomes important

The term *cross-border* education emerged in the last five years and is now widely used. The UNESCO/OECD (2005) defined cross-border education as:

> Higher education that takes place in situations where the teacher, students, programme, institution/provider or course materials cross national jurisdictional borders. Cross-border education may include higher education by public/private and not-for-profit/for-profit providers. It encompasses a wide range of modalities in continuum from face-to-face (taking various forms from students travelling abroad and campuses abroad) to distance learning (using a range of technologies and including e-learning).

The conceptualisation is different here from that of the transnational education which emphasises the learner and awarding institution, while cross-border education emphasises national borders. In this description people, programmes, providers and course materials cross borders and use a variety of modes.

The term *borderless education* first appeared in a 2000 Australian report by Cunningham et al. This term goes beyond geographic and jurisdictional borders and includes temporal, disciplinary and conceptual borders. However this term is quite abstract and is difficult to use in applied and concrete situations.

In Australia the term *offshore education* has been used interchangeably with the term transnational education. Transnational education was used to simply describe offshore international student education regardless of the mode of study. As the terminology used in Curtin University documents and by Curtin University staff is *offshore education*, this is the term the concept will be referred to as in this study.

## Review of the contextual literature

The contextual literature on offshore education concentrates on the opportunities, risks and planning issues in establishing and running offshore programs and the quality assurance issues pertaining to these.

Asia's economic growth has had a major impact on Australia's emergence as a supplier of international education, with demand from Asia dominating onshore enrolments in Australia over the past twenty years. However, changing circumstances in Australia's key markets will require greater offshore participation by Australian institutions. In South-East Asia Australian institutions are leading the way in establishing branch campuses and forming twinning arrangements with local institutions. The need for this will continue to grow as the global education market continues to evolve and demand more sophisticated and tailored modes of delivery (AEI, 2005; Nelson 2005). The scope of international activities in Australian higher education has increased considerably over the last decade and offshore programmes have become core businesses at universities. In 2005 there were about 240,000 international students enrolled in all Australian universities and more than 63,000 of these were offshore students (Kristoffersen, 2006). Australia is considered as world leader in the provision of offshore education (Leask, 2006).

The General Agreement on Trade in Services has defined four modes of supply of any service:

1. Cross-border supply, where the service crosses the border- the consumer does not. This kind of service includes the provision of online and distance education.
2. Consumption abroad is when the consumer crosses the border- this refers to students travelling abroad to study.
3. Commercial presence refers to the supplier establishing a commercial presence abroad- i.e. the establishment of campuses in another country.
4. Presence of Natural Persons: means people crossing the border on a temporary basis to provide a service - this includes the short-term provision of courses in

another country by academics of an Australian institution. (Ziguras, 2003; DFAT, 2005; Knight, 2005;)

The participation of Australian universities and other educational institutions in offshore programs is well established (AVCC 2003). However, international education means a wide range of activities apart from strategic alliances, including attracting international students to Australian educational institutions, student exchange, consultancy and collaboration in research. Integration into offshore markets through alliances has been called the 'second wave' in the internationalisation of education, following the 'first wave' of attracting international students to study at institutions in Australia (Mazzarol, Soutar & Seng, 2003). It is further proposed that a 'third wave' of internationalisation might be the establishment of branch campuses offshore, or of offering online courses via the Internet (Mazzarol et al., 2003).

Offshore enrolments are increasing as more Australian higher education institutions enter into partnerships and twinning arrangements with overseas institutions and establish branch campuses. Australia forecasts that by 2025 half of the country's international students will be studying offshore (Bohm et al, 2002).

Australian educational institutions are currently involved in five models of education programs:

- Twinning programs: Partner institutions collaborate on a system of articulation. For example the partner institution delivers the initial semester of any course in its own country, and the Australian institution provides the education in the final stages. The Australian provider designs the curriculum and stipulates course assessments and standards. Often degrees are provided jointly.
- Branch campuses: The Australian university opens a satellite campus offshore, teaches students their entire degree at the branch campus and awards the degrees as well. The traditional branch campus is characterised by a substantial physical presence with academic and student facilities. Branch campus developments are large scale, resource intensive operations which carry significant risks, as well as opportunities.

- Credit transfer programs: The Australian institution accepts credit transfers from overseas universities.

- Accreditation programs/ 'franchise' arrangements: The Australian institution designs the curriculum and its assessment, some supervision and quality control, but the overseas provider teaches the course without further Australian input. Students are not granted Australian degrees.

- Distance education: Students are taught by correspondence, including internet-based learning and reside in their own countries. The use of IT has greatly expanded the reach and methodological sophistication of distance education (Verbik, 2006).

**Benefits and risks of offshore arrangements**

Currently each of Australia's 38 universities is involved in providing offshore education and there are 82 international branch campuses operating around the globe. There is a great deal of debate generated on Australian campuses about the cost and benefits of offshore programs. Rationales for entering into offshore arrangements or opening a branch campus are manyfold: there are opportunities to diversify mode of delivery to international students and be less dependent on the income of the home campus; financial benefits; enhanced profile for the university, opportunities for partnerships with the academics and industry of the partner country and opportunities to reach new markets and students. Some of the main benefits are the control over provisions of resources and staff, quality assurance by not depending on a local partner to deliver the courses at an appropriate level; the opportunity to establish a corporate presence in another country and an increased number of alumni. In addition at the academic level there is a chance to develop new curricula, additional research and development opportunities and enhanced staff mobility. It is also hoped that institutions establishing offshore partnerships can gain competitive advantage over other institutions that do not have a presence in the particular country (McBurnie & Pollock, 2000; Rizvi, 2004).

Whilst the potential benefits are great, there are also many risks involved in the establishment of offshore programs. Many risk factors are out of the control of the

institutions in the international environment and relate to the fluctuations of demand and changing government policies. The key risks relevant to higher education include financial reputational, legal, sovereign and physical/personal risks (McBurnie & Pollock, 2000; Rizvi, 2004). Depending on the agreed mode of delivery, the financial risks can vary. In the case of simple licensing agreements financial risks can be minimal, as opposed to branch campus agreements, where they can be major risks. The main reputational risk is if the university is perceived as not providing quality education programmes. This can lead to negative publicity and financial loss. Legal risks arise from the fact that as legal entities educational institutions may be subject to legal action. Some Australian universities have also experienced difficulties caused by poorly crafted contracts and joint-venture agreements and further difficulties with pulling out of contracts without doing too much damage to students and institutional reputation. Sovereign risks arise because particular foreign governments allow institutions to operate, and if those governments change, so may the legislative and regulatory processes. Risk management plans are important to ensure that the projects remain viable even under a variety of events. In addition to the risks of everyday life, the probable risk of danger to the personal safety and health of students and staff is greater in some countries than in others (McBurnie & Pollock, 2000; Rizvi, 2004).

**Planning and quality assurance**

Effective planning is essential to maximise the opportunities and to minimise the risks outlined above. McBurnie and Pollock (2000) suggest that there are three dimensions to planning: strategic, academic and business related. Strategically the plan must fit with the mission of the university and help achieve its goals and objectives. The plan must be academically sound in terms of learning experience for students, the appropriate professional activity for the teaching areas and the maintenance of the quality of the programmes. In order to assist the academic quality and integrity of the programmes universities need to utilise a set of quality assurance procedures. From a business perspective the plan must be financially viable and sustainable.

As Australian universities pursue opportunities offshore, the host country regulatory requirements are becoming increasingly important. Although GATS plays a part in minimising risks due to government decisions in the host country, institutions still

have the final responsibility for ensuring quality and protection against market upheavals. The rapid growth of offshore education has been accompanied by a lack of strategic focus in higher education institutions involved in offshore education, and by debate over quality assurance issues (Connelly et al, 2006). *Quality assurance* is a recent notion and has emerged as a consequence of the internationalisation of higher education. In Australia it relies on legislation that provides for registration, accreditation and auditing of programs. Quality assurance in the context of higher education is defined as verification that standards in design, teaching and assessment are being met. There are three criteria for national quality assurance: it protects the interest of students and supports education providers, it is transparent, and it enables recognition of qualifications and student mobility (Castle & Kelly, 2004; DEST, 2005).

However, with the large number and dispersed nature of offshore partnerships, quality is not easily managed. Australian universities are self-accrediting institutions and are responsible for the management of the quality of the their programs, no matter where or by whom they are taught. Major issues include the lack of consensus on various aspects of quality assurance which is partly due to competing stakeholder demands. It has been pointed out by various sources that quality assurance is an important part of academia and is central when education is considered as commodity. It is also fundamental to the security and mobility of qualifications. In terms of regulatory demands there is now a plethora of codes and guidelines universities need to consider. In order to achieve success, universities should consider a whole-of- institution approach through an internationalisation plan that fits into the broader university strategic plan (Connelly & Olsen, 2006).

Australian universities are subject to regular and ongoing reporting which evaluate their activities and outcomes. *The Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* provides legislation for quality assurance in Australia, through the Department of Education, Science and Training. This legislation has been set up to protect the interest of students coming to Australia on student visas, by providing tuition and financial assurance and by prescribing a national approach to registration of providers. It also sets the minimum services and conditions which universities must provide for international students (AVCC, 2002).

Similarly, in 2002 the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee set up a document entitled *Provision of Education to International Students: Code and Guidelines for Australian Universities*. It has been claimed that even though there have been attempts to develop frameworks for the provision of quality education offshore, there are no uniform sets of criteria amongst Australian universities and indeed there are some differences in understanding what is involved in the provision of quality. Various universities, associations and agencies have developed codes of conduct and practice. These sets of principles aim to guide the establishment of partnerships and the practice and delivery of programmes in other countries. They aim to assure quality in offshore provision of education services and to maintain the integrity of the awards (Knight, 2005).

The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) has been set up as a comprehensive national framework to oversee audits of universities and the state government agencies responsible for the accreditation of private institutions delivering offshore courses. It evaluates the performance of universities' quality assurance measures in relation to international education with reference to the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee's *Provision of education to international students: Code and guidelines for Australian universities* to which all Australian universities are signatories (AVCC, 2002). The agency was set up as a joint Federal-State government initiative to audit and report on the quality assurance of courses provided by Australian universities offshore (DFAT, 2005). Now that AUQA is in place, Australia has a reputable quality assurance system for offshore provisions ensuring that the character and integrity of the local education system is protected (McBurnie, 2003; AUQA,2006)).

In 2005, Australian Ministers for Education and Training agreed to a 'Transnational Quality Strategy' framework to protect and promote the quality of Australian education and training delivered offshore (Connelly & Garton, 2005). There are three areas of focus for this strategy: communication and promotion of the arrangements for quality assurance to all stakeholders, access to data about Australia's offshore education and strengthened national quality framework. This quality framework will include

- a list of quality providers and courses for transnational delivery

- a Code of Practice for Quality Transnational Education and Training

- quality assessment

- handling complaints

- support for good practice and

- guidelines for good practice in quality transnational delivery.

## Review of the Empirical literature

Empirical literature of international offshore education focuses on mainly qualitative and case studies on perceptions of students of their teachers, programmes, learning and assessment; on quality assurance of teaching, on professional development for academic staff dealing with offshore partners and students; and a limited number of studies focus on academics' experiences on teaching offshore. However there seem to have been little research done on the concerns of those academic staff who are involved in offshore education and the effects of that involvement on the academics' working lives. This study hopes to fill this gap and provide some insight into the way academic staff deal with the various issues related to their tasks of providing service in offshore education.

### Student perceptions

Some qualitative studies have been carried out on the expectations of offshore students towards their teachers and their courses and their experiences of studying for a degree delivered offshore (Leask, 2006; Pyvis & Chapman, 2006, 2007). These studies focused mainly on the students and their relationships to their studies and the quality of their experiences in general, and to their teachers in particular. Apart from some answers for how students feel about their education, some conclusions can be also drawn from the findings of these studies as to the characteristics of the ideal offshore teacher, the major challenges facing academic staff teaching in the

programmes and the various needs for professional development amongst academic staff.

It has been proposed that students studying for degrees offshore considered an international education to be part of a 'long-term trajectory of identity formation' (Chapman & Pyvis, 2006) and their choice of programme served their progress along this trajectory. A lot of variables seem to impact on the reasons students enrol in a particular programme. Some of these are financial, some are personal and some are professional. All students, however, thought it important to have offshore staff teaching them who had very good teaching skills, cultural knowledge and knowledge of policy and procedure- in that order. Students considered the ability of staff to provide them with relevant and engaging teaching, to give them feedback on their learning in order to enable them to achieve the course outcomes, as the most important factors in good teaching skills. Knowledge of cultural context was also deemed to be important, which factor is significant when considering professional development of staff engaged in offshore teaching.

**Academics' experiences**

The fact that Australian academics teach offshore provides various benefits to the programmes. Apart from being involved in teaching, they are also at the forefront of marketing their programmes. Australian academics bring experience in their field, deep knowledge of their curriculum, and high-level teaching skills to their students and can be flexible in adapting the programme to suit the students' needs. Most importantly they ensure that the standards of teaching onshore and offshore are comparable. However, difficulties with travelling offshore to teach are aplenty (Evans & Tregenza, 2002; Debowski, 2003; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; NTEU, 2004, 2004b; Castle & Kelly, 2004; Dunn & Wallace 2006). Teaching in Asian countries requires a full day of travelling and most often teaching intensively on weekends. Intensive teaching is often eight to ten hours a day with individualised assistance for students during tea and lunch breaks. Locations for teaching are often not ideal often hotel settings where it is difficult to manage space and technology to aid teaching. Thus academics need to design their courses to anticipate difficult learning situations (Debowski, 2003). Apart from the academic expectations and demands of travelling

there are disruptions to family life, and to the academics' professional lives at their home institutions. They might miss out on attendance at meetings and other university activities and also lose precious time to do research. Other colleagues might also feel the impact of academics' absence, as they need to pick up the core duties of teaching and marking.

The National Tertiary Union has compiled a guide for members working offshore which provides some practical advice on some professional issues, but does not concentrate on teaching (NTEU, 2004a, 2004b). The key concerns raised in the document are grouped into two: professional concerns and industrial concerns. Professional concerns are to do with quality of teaching, autonomy and academic freedom and staff development. The industrial issues are workload, remuneration and intellectual property related. The document has found that staff involvement in offshore programs and thus staff concerns vary depending on the mode of the programme delivery. Australian stuff have a major role to play in both the marketing and the quality assurance of the offshore programmes.

It was also found that collegial contact with local teachers was rare and it was clear that Australian academics were not always confident of their knowledge of geography, culture and the education system of the countries they taught in. Traditional power relationships between local and Australian teachers also come to play when Australian academics are in charge of the units and coordinate the various activities and the local teachers are the tutors (Leask, 2004). Even though contact between local tutors and Australian academics seems to be limited, Dunn and Wallace (2006) have found that the knowledge and expertise of local tutors and better relationships with them were regarded as important and was a source that could and should be easily tapped into.

**Professional development**

Four major themes have emerged from the studies on students' perceptions relating to the professional development of academic staff: they need to be experts in their fields, be skilled teachers and managers of the learning environment, be efficient intercultural communicators, and be approachable, patient and encouraging. Staff

development for internationalisation then can be seen as a journey through a series of these stages towards the development of a culturally inclusive curriculum. It has recently been found that changes 'in tasks, technologies, accountability and regulatory compliance have changed the nature of academic work, including the management of courses over multiple sites' (Dunn & Wallace 2005). These have led to sometimes unrecognised consequences on academic staff to whom overseas teaching often comes as an additional demand on teaching and research. Thus professional development should be immediately relevant to staff and should not be an additional workload burden.

Several surveys and studies (Debowski, 2003; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Dixon & Scott, 2004; S Dunn & Wallace, 2006) have found that while universities were beginning to offer induction and development programs for academics teaching offshore, most academics involved never had professional development to help them adapt to teaching in this new environment. The adequacy of preparation for offshore teaching has become increasingly important because of the scrutiny of Australian universities by external quality agencies for example by AUQA. While most academics undertook no formal training, informal briefings and mentoring were very common. Academics felt this enabled them to address specific issues and give and receive advice particularly useful to their own areas of teaching. Often senior academics or the course coordinators were responsible for briefing and managing those going offshore to teach. These colleagues could give up-to-date advice on current political, economic and social situations in the specific countries involved. In addition the majority of academics teaching offshore believe that teaching international, especially Asian students in Australia is already a good preparation for teaching offshore while also agreeing that staff might need help to understand the special circumstances of offshore students, the ways to adapt the curriculum to teaching in different locations, the ways to deal with the stresses and logistics of overseas travel, and the legal obligations of teaching offshore (Gribble & Ziguras, 2003).

Considering the difficulties both local and offshore academics face, it has been suggested that the best way to tackle professional development is with support from management at all levels in the form of recognition, time and rewards. In order for

academics not to feel professional development a burden the programmes that are most beneficial in supporting the development of new competencies need to be identified and provided in flexible modes. Universities can provide staff with country-specific information to assist lecturers to make their teaching relevant, provide staff with information about general issues that offshore teacher face regularly. Institutional support should also be given to the development and maintenance of groups formed around individual programmes who can share informal support and information and communicate within and across countries online (Debowski, 2003; Dunn & Wallace, 2005). The AVCC's (2002, pp7-8) *Codes and Guidelines for Australian universities* states that universities should

- Ensure that all staff involved with international students and other clients are competent to deal with the students' special circumstances.

- Develop training programmes, including cross-cultural programmes, appropriate to the different levels of involvement and responsibility among staff.

- Ensure that staff are well prepared for overseas assignments and visits.

- Ensure that all staff involved with international students are aware of their relevant responsibilities under the relevant Australian laws and relevant laws of countries where the university is providing education services.


**Curriculum**

There are also various views on how to relate curriculum and pedagogy to the offshore context. Anecdotally, and not supported by research at the moment, offshore students wish to gain an Australian degree and want a good insight into Australian ways of thinking and practices and thus want to be taught an Australian curriculum. There is another view in the literature expressing a concern that to adapt curriculum and pedagogy is condescending and is a kind of colonialism which denies the sophisticated Asian cultures the choice between their own and western approaches (Dunn & Wallace 2006). What is claimed to be desirable is a cultural inclusivity in curriculum and pedagogy and an engagement with international perspectives.

**<u>Conclusion</u>**

The impact of globalisation on the international dimension of education is significant. It includes an increased demand for tertiary education; the introduction of a market and trade approach to education; a renewed emphasis on education mobility and advances in the use of information technologies for the delivery of education (Knight, 2005). These developments have resulted in more focus on the movement of education across borders.

The relatively new growth in mobility of programmes and providers through physical and virtual modes of delivery has presented new opportunities for increased access to higher education; for strategic alliances between countries and regions and institutions; for income generation; for the improvement of academic quality and for increased mutual understanding. However, there are also risks associated with the processes; the risks and benefits vary between developed and developing countries, and between institutions. There is a need for appropriate policies and regulations to guide and monitor current and future developments.

Australia is a leader in terms of successfully exporting education, in the number of students enrolled and in the amount of revenue generated. This expansion, however has led to the view that Australian institutions are expansionists, focusing primarily on revenue generation, rather than on traditional educational values and quality. These criticism need to be heard and a more culture-driven approach adopted to the internationalisation of education so that Australia can be successful in gaining access to the markets of its major trading partners trough the WTO (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2003). Factors critical to Australia maintaining its leading position in the provision of both onshore and offshore education include maintaining and reinforcing national quality assurance and mutual recognition frameworks (DFAT, 2005).

Academics involved in offshore teaching are increasingly noting the increase of their workload and pressures to meet the demands of their onshore and offshore responsibilities. It is clear that academics require a range of skills to effectively cope with teaching offshore whilst maintaining their presence in their local universities. These challenges need to be recognised and universities need to become responsible

in addressing these and associated issues. Organisational support is the key in building guidelines for the conducting of overseas business and in ensuring that staff is well supported both offshore on onshore. In addition universities need to demonstrate the ways in which they ensure the quality of teaching and learning, thus supporting and encouraging the professional development of academics teaching offshore is one important way of achieving this. Appropriate policies and practices for staff teaching offshore are critical to the effective delivery of the programmes.

Review of the literature has revealed that as yet there seem to be few empirical studies focusing on academics' concerns regarding offshore teaching, their experiences and their professional development needs. This study hopes to fill that gap by considering the background, functions and concerns of a group of academics involved in offshore teaching. Only by taking into account the thoughts and concerns of the academics on the ground can universities truly address the various issues which arise from being involved in all facets of offshore education. It is hoped that once those issues are addressed staff will be happy to make a commitment to the provision of quality programmes if internationalisation.