

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Australia has a tradition of educating overseas students dating back at least to the beginning of the twentieth century. However, defined government policy in the area was not formalised until 1950 with the development of the Colombo Plan (O'Donoghue, 1994: 2). This Plan, as a form of Australian government aid, provided overseas students with scholarships to study in Australian universities and colleges (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1992: 2). For the next 35 years increasing numbers of students from overseas came to Australia to study. These students were either directly supported by Australia's aid program, or they received what was effectively a subsidy because their tuition fees did not cover the costs of the education provided. Since 1986, however, the Commonwealth Government has encouraged higher education institutions in the country to market Australia's educational services overseas (Industry Commission, 1991). Much of the effort in this regard has centred on attracting full fee-paying students from Asia and its success is attested to by the fact that in 1997, overseas students contributed about \$3.2 billion to the Australian economy (Downer, 1998a: 2), of which around \$1.121 billion came from fees paid by Asian students (Jolley, 1997: 75). Also, the total number of overseas students in Australia in all sectors had increased from about 22,000 in 1986 (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1992: 3) to more than 150,000 in 1997 (Sullivan, 1998: 4)

The Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector, the main provider of technical and vocational education and training in Australia, has particularly welcomed the increased enrolment of overseas students. During the first five years of the 1990s, around 7000 overseas students a year, almost all of them from Asian countries, were studying at TAFE colleges (Australian TAFE International, 1996: iv). By this time, the Asian market was swiftly becoming recognised as having a tremendous capacity for growth in the area of overseas students. This perception was confirmed when, by 1997, around 10,000 overseas students a year, again mostly from Asian countries, were studying at TAFE colleges (Department of Employment, Employment, Education and Training, 1998).

Both the previous and forecast rate of expansion seem to have remained relatively unaffected by the very severe financial crisis in many parts of Asia, particularly South-East Asia, that commenced in Thailand in 1997. The crisis quickly spread to many other countries in the region and brought strong reactions. In Indonesia, for example, the crisis saw widespread civil, religious and political turmoil arise, several separatist movements revived, and, in May 1998, Indonesia's second President, Suharto, forced to resign from office after 32 years as the nation's leader. A new, uncertain era was facing South-East Asia.

While South-East Asia's future, and Australia's potential role in it, are unsure, it seems likely that large numbers of educated and trained people will, more than ever, be needed to institute, support and enhance the various countries' government and private institutions. Given, in particular, the region's present limited capacity to provide education and training, it is highly likely that even

greater numbers of its citizens than before will continue to seek education and training overseas, and that Australia will continue to be a major target country for this experience. Accordingly, the phenomenon of overseas students studying in Australia is one that merits much serious research.

The research project reported in this dissertation is one attempt to meet the challenge that exists. It focused on one particular educational sector within Australia that is concerned with the education of overseas students, namely, the TAFE sector. Furthermore, it restricted its focus to TAFE in Western Australia (TAFE WA). This was partly to make the project manageable. However, it was also because of the proximity of Western Australia to South-East Asia and the likelihood that Western Australia, through colleges in the TAFE sector, would become a main provider of technical and vocational education and training courses for South-East Asian students in the future.

The project had three particular aims. The first aim was to develop an understanding of the background to overseas students studying at TAFE colleges in Western Australia. The second aim was to develop an understanding of the present functions of TAFE WA in providing for overseas students who come to study at its colleges. The third aim was to develop an understanding of the concerns of TAFE WA personnel who have had responsibilities relating to the provision of technical and vocational education and training for this student cohort.

From the outset the intention was that these research aims should be approached with 'practical' relevance in mind. Such an orientation was influenced partly by

the fact that Doctor of Education dissertations of this nature are primarily meant to focus on educational issues that connect to contemporary concerns. However, it was also influenced by the personal experiences of the present author in working with overseas students in the TAFE WA system, and a commitment arising out of these experiences to engage in research aimed at improving practice relating to the education and training of this student cohort. At the same time, the aims were broad enough to allow for a research orientation that went beyond 'immediate relevance'. In this regard, the first aim was based on a recognition that the past can impact on the present and, consequently, needs to be always kept in mind in dealing with contemporary issues (Aldrich, 1996). The second aim recognised that the functions that people in TAFE WA perform in providing for overseas students can extend well beyond those laid down in 'duty statements' and 'job description forms', while also realising that many expected functions might not be performed for various reasons. Finally, it was recognised that it is only with such a background in mind that issues raised in pursuit of the third aim could best be interpreted. It will be recalled that the third aim was to develop an understanding of the concerns of TAFE WA personnel who have had responsibilities relating to the provision of technical and vocational education and training for overseas students.

The remainder of this chapter is an introduction to the dissertation. First, it briefly sketches the history of overseas students coming to study in Australia. Next, it deals with the role of education in development and raises the issue of why students from developing nations go abroad to study. Thirdly, a brief outline of

the literature base to the study reported later on in the dissertation is presented. Finally, an overview of the research is outlined.

The issues in these four sections are dealt with in only a very general manner as they are taken up in greater detail in subsequent chapters. At the same time, however, it is important that they be outlined here so that the reader can form a general overview of the work at this early stage.

Overseas Students in Australia

For many years overseas students have studied in formal courses offered by Australian educational institutions. They have done so under a variety of arrangements, including the Colombo Plan scholarships, fellowships provided under aid programs and projects, and the sponsored students' program (Sullivan, 1998: 4). Also, particularly since 1986, increasing numbers have come to Australia as full-fee-paying students (Sullivan, 1998: 4). Most of those students have come from the Asia-Pacific region (Downer, 1998a: 2), which contains the countries that are Australia's closest neighbours, thus perpetuating the trend that has existed ever since overseas students first started coming to the country.

Since the early 1970s academics began to take an interest in various aspects of overseas students in Australia. One of the early works was that of Bochner and Wicks (1972). This work highlighted the need for Australian educators to take heed of the cultural background of these students. Amongst the essays contained in this work were those entitled 'The cultural background of Southeast Asian

students in Australia', 'Some aspects of Thai culture', 'Pacific Islands students in Australia' and 'African culture patterns'. However, while this selection of topics was very enlightened for the time, no prominence was given to the students' voices.

Throughout the 1970s, academics interested in studying overseas students in Australia had a sizeable cohort upon which they could focus their interests. These included both 'sponsored' and 'private' students from, particularly, countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The fares and living expenses of 'private' students were usually paid for by their families and friends. By the late 1970s, there were about 10,000 private Asian students in Australia (O'Donoghue, 1994: 2). Within this group, many students travelled from various nations in South-East Asia. Amongst the factors that Wicks (1978) identified as being responsible for the growth in this student population were the geographic proximity of Australia to South-East Asia, the quality and range of educational facilities in the country, the severe competition for places in traditional Western centres of learning such as Britain, Western Europe and the United States, and the persistent shortage of facilities in Asian countries themselves. He also highlighted the educational policies of some racially divided South-East Asian states that favoured one particular community over another. This factor, for reasons of diplomacy, rarely received public recognition (O'Donoghue, 1994: 4).

Also in the late 1970s, Wicks (1978) pointed out that each year there were, on average, over 2,000 sponsored students from Asia on the campuses of the Australian universities, colleges of advanced education, and secondary schools.

More than half of these students were from Malaysia and Singapore, but there were also large numbers from Indonesia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Thailand, and the South-Asian sub-continent. Most of these students were in Australia under scholarships awarded under the Colombo Plan. As sponsored students, the terms of these scholarships demanded that they return home upon successful completion of their studies (O'Donoghue, 1994: 4).

The Colombo Plan arose out of the Commonwealth Conference on Foreign Affairs held in Colombo in January 1950, in order to exchange views on the needs of the countries of Asia. Australia was a participating nation and remains a member country of the resultant Colombo Plan. The overarching objective of a principal committee of the Conference was to provide a framework within which international co-operation efforts could be promoted to assist Asian countries raise their living standards through economic and social development. The primary focus of all Colombo Plan activities was the development of people in the Asia-Pacific region. Among other things, the Plan encouraged developing member countries to donate to, and participate in, economic and technical co-operation activities with other developing nations.

While some saw the Colombo Plan and other sponsorship arrangements as a valuable way of providing aid to developing nations, others interpreted them to be no more than a covert search for trade in the Pacific, a perception that continued into the 1980s. For example, the Goldring Committee in 1984 perceived the education of overseas students to be nothing more than a commodity to be bought and sold (Smart, 1988). Similarly, in the Jackson Report (1984), economic

interests were seen to be superior to educational or cultural pursuits, with the marketing of educational projects deemed to be important in contexts only where shortfalls existed in domestic education overseas (Jackson, 1984: 87). Furthermore, the potential benefits to the Australian economy through the development of an education 'export' industry were highlighted.

In 1985, the Federal Labor government in Australia generated a new policy for overseas students wishing to study in the country. One outcome of this policy was a categorisation of overseas students according to the origins of their financial backing. These student categories were entitled 'subsidised' (by the existing student-funded overseas student charge), 'sponsored' (by the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau) and 'full fee-paying students' (Industry Commission, 1991: 21). O'Donoghue (1994: 4) argued that the designation of the latter category reflected the government's move towards economic rationalist policy making. He went on to note that earnings from education were expected to achieve \$100 million by 1998. In fact, by the year 2000 export earnings far exceeded this figure, generating \$3.5 billion per annum in fees, goods and services (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2000).

Smart (1986) argues that tertiary institutions entered the arena of marketing educational services primarily through forms of government encouragement and coercion. Institutions were urged to look for new ways of showing 'educational entrepreneurship'. Part of the government's approach, according to Smart (1986), was to highlight the importance to Australia's national interest of improving the quality of Australia's education resources from the revenue gained from such fresh

entrepreneurial initiatives. The provision of export development grants and the reduction of the existing Federal funding reinforced the notion that privatisation was the way forward (Smart, 1986, 1987). In 1988, the argument was advanced further with the signalling that the introduction of fees for private overseas students was a way for universities to generate income and become less dependent on government funding.

Although all sectors of education, including schools and colleges and TAFE, were able to enter the private student market by 1987, the trend in overseas demand favoured university education over other education sectors. However, from 1991, a major expansion occurred in overseas demand in the vocational education and training sector. According to a government report into the export of education services at the time, a number of concerns had arisen in relation to the full fee-paying overseas student 'industry' (Industry Commission, 1991: 185). Most of these concerns were raised in connection with overseas students studying in universities. This was because almost all overseas students in Australia at the time of the report were attending universities, with the TAFE sector enrolling only very small numbers, having taken longer than universities to pursue the government's policy in this regard. Nevertheless, the report also incorporated TAFE students through its deliberations and findings, maintaining that many of the concerns about universities were also relevant to the TAFE sector (Industry Commission, 1991: 185). The report argued that:

As numbers of students attending TAFE rise, and as funding pressures affecting places for domestic students build up, many of the same issues now being experienced by universities will come to the fore in the TAFE sector (Industry Commission, 1991: 185).

According to Alexander and Rizvi (1993: 19), a major problem with the move towards viewing education as a commodity to be sold was that higher education was now seen as a ‘uniform product for consumption’. They held that because of this development, education ran the risk of becoming standardised and divorced from particular cultural concerns (Alexander and Rizvi, 1993: 19). They also argued that Australian higher education institutions felt perfectly justified in providing the same range of subjects to all students and regarded teaching styles to be neutral with respect to particular cultural backgrounds. This was a particular issue in the case of students from many and varied South-East Asian countries, who were often mistakenly treated as if they were a homogeneous group. There was a concern that these students would be subject to the influence of a standardised Australian curriculum, which would find its way into the work practices that the students would eventually follow in their different home countries. On this, Alexander and Rizvi (1993: 19) contended that when domestic practices in foreign countries acquired international characteristics, they inevitably undermined local traditions and practices.

Despite such warnings, however, there is still some truth in Jones’ (1989) contention made more than a decade ago, that the literature on overseas students in Australia has neglected the educational and cultural aspects of overseas students in favour of financial, administrative and marketing concerns. Indeed, some would argue that Hodgkin’s (1972: 16) observation of nearly thirty years ago still holds, namely, that there is a tendency for foreign students to be placed into “exclusive categories such as ‘foreign’ or ‘Asian’”, which often leads to “fallacious

assumptions about adjustment problems, educational difficulties, and living patterns in the overseas situation”.

More recently, Volet and Kee (1993) have claimed that most literature has given a stereotypical view of overseas students, thus neglecting their individual differences. This echoed Ballard’s (1987) emphasis on the importance of developing an understanding of the cultures and the educational systems of the home countries of these students. In this connection, the guide for TAFE teachers of overseas students published in 1992 by the National TAFE Overseas Network (Mezger, 1992) provided extremely valuable information for TAFE teachers. However, this manual did not contain accounts of first hand experiences of being a TAFE staff member dealing with overseas students. It is arguable that an understanding of such experiences is essential for teachers, support staff and decision-makers. It is also arguable that it should deal with individual cultural groups.

Students from Developing Countries Studying Overseas

By the second half of the 1990s, estimates suggested that there were approximately 1.35 million overseas students undertaking tertiary education outside their countries of origin, with Australia hosting more of these students on a per capita basis than the United States, the United Kingdom, or Canada (Downer, 1997: 3). According to Shinn, Welch and Bagnall (1999: 82), by 1995, Australia had joined the ranks of international players in the market for overseas students as one of the largest receiving countries. By and large, the industrialised countries tend to be net

‘exporters’ of tertiary education services, while the developing countries are net ‘importers’. The United States, Western Europe, Australia and Canada are the countries most favoured by overseas students, while Japan, Italy and Finland are among the high-income industrialised countries that continue to send students overseas to study (Jolley, 1997: 5). However, most of the overseas student population throughout the world comes from non-industrialised regions, namely, the Middle East, Latin America, Africa and Asia. The Philippines is an interesting case in that it receives students from North Korea and Pakistan, while at the same time it sends students to the United States.

The number of overseas students internationally increased from approximately 240,000 in 1964 to 374,000 in 1970, an average growth rate of 7.7% per annum (Jolley, 1997: 14). By 1976, it had reached 705,000, representing an average growth rate in the interim of 11.2% per annum (UNESCO, 1996). This growth then slowed significantly up until 1988, but then accelerated again. Asia contributed significantly to this acceleration. In 1977, Asian students comprised 19% of total overseas students, and by 1993 this figure had reached 35.7% (UNESCO, 1996). Also, between 1987 and 1993, the major countries contributing to this growth in the number of Asian students studying abroad were those with higher income economies, particularly Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore. However, the larger, but less-developed countries, such as China and India also began to make a significant contribution. Over the next decade, the growth in the overseas students’ market is likely to become increasingly reliant on such ‘poorer’ countries, including China, India and Indonesia (UNESCO, 1996).

In terms of total enrolments of overseas students, the United States has been the dominant host country over recent decades (UNESCO, 1996). Next in importance have been the three European nations of France, Germany and the United Kingdom. Canada and Italy have tended to lose some ground recently, and Japan, Australia and China have increased their share. Further, enrolments of overseas students, when compared with total enrolments, have fallen somewhat in France and Canada. At the same time, they have risen in Germany and the United Kingdom, and there has been a sustained rise in Japan, China and Australia (UNESCO, 1996).

The Australian government's policy on overseas students is part of its broader policy on international education which, in turn, is now an established part of Australia's export activity (Beazley, 1992: 1). Most overseas students in Australia come to study at universities (Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 1998). Most of them also come from Asia, thus enhancing Australia's economic, political and cultural integration with the fast growing Asia-Pacific region (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1992: 5). Accordingly, it is not surprising that this phenomenon of overseas students in Australia has been the subject of quite an amount of research. However, the growing body of literature relates primarily to universities and very little of it is TAFE focused. At the same time, however, much of that body of literature is also instructive for TAFE. While Chapter Three considers this literature in detail, it is appropriate to briefly consider it at this stage.

Overview of the Literature

Three prominent themes emerge from the literature about students from developing countries who study overseas. In broad terms, these issues concern the welfare of the students, the teaching and learning they experience and the curriculum they study. Each of these areas will now be briefly considered in turn.

The Australian academic literature on overseas students was developed in its earliest forms by personnel most closely connected with student welfare. These personnel included student counsellors and advisors (Ballard and Clanchy, 1991, 1988, 1984; Ballard, 1989, 1987, 1982; Bradley and Bradley, 1984; Rao, 1976; Keats, 1972). The research that they produced was mainly concerned with the welfare issues associated with studying and living in a foreign country. Areas of concern centred on language difficulties, housing issues, cultural adjustments to Australian living and difficulties faced by students taking courses in a foreign language. While these studies will be considered in detail in Chapter Three, what is important to note here is that they brought to the fore a recognition that overseas students were experiencing difficulties in adjusting to a culturally different way of life in Australia.

The appropriateness of the teaching styles adopted for the promotion of learning amongst overseas students constitutes another area of research. On this, Bilbow (1989: 85) drew attention to the possibility that the lecture-style of delivery might pose severe problems for those from non-English speaking backgrounds because

of linguistic, discursal and cultural sources. He went on to argue that this is an area that merits serious investigation.

The model of providing for the needs of overseas students that was prevalent for so long in Australia also suggested that social, cultural and intellectual adaptations were required of overseas students on entering higher education institutions in overseas countries. What was being argued was that overseas students needed to be assisted in 'adjusting' to the host country environment. Studies highlighting the importance of adjustment originate with works like those of Keats (1972), and were developed further by Gassin (1982), and Bock and Gassin (1982). No significant studies in this regard were developed in relation to TAFE. The works of Ballard (1982) and Ballard and Clanchy (1984), however, which offered instruction to Australian universities based on a 'deficit model', are likely to have been used extensively within the TAFE sector.

The third major area of research on overseas students focuses on the curriculum that they studied. By the 1990s disquiet was being expressed about the tendency to slot overseas students into courses designed for 'first world' situations without much consideration being given to the appropriateness of such courses for practice in their countries of origin. A related issue that emerged in Australia by the mid-1990s was dissatisfaction with the content of some of the courses being offered in that they did not fulfil the requirements that were necessary for registration in their profession in their home country (Smith, 1994: 5)

The inefficacy of using curriculum material appropriate for one culture with other cultural groups has also been a subject of research. A number of the studies relate to expatriate international development consultants working with counterparts in developing countries (O'Donoghue, 1994; Leach, 1993, 1994; Ware, 1994; Scott-Stevens, 1987). The research undertaken by Ware (1994) in devising English-language programs for Vietnamese and Cambodian students through Radio Australia is also instructive for those developing programs for overseas students who come to study in Australia. To ensure accuracy and relevance of the programs, Ware travelled to Cambodia and, as she put it:

.....took every opportunity to engage local people in conversation, and observed a wide range of people at work, at home and at leisure, discussing lifestyles and customs, government, the public service infrastructure, health, medicine and potential for business development (Ware, 1994: 6).

Ware also engaged other Australian expatriates with regional experience to advise on particular needs of students beyond the capital city and she took many photographs concerning program content (Ware, 1994: 6). This material was then used by an illustrator in the development of the relevant text. The challenge to both the university and TAFE sectors in Australia is to learn from and build upon experiences such as this.

Much revenue has been generated in Australia as a result of the increasing number of overseas full-fee paying students. Nevertheless, in recent years a number of groups and individuals have raised serious ethical concerns about the process. In particular, they have objected to a notion of education as a commodity and as a service that can be viewed "in terms of profitability or usefulness" (Kennedy, 1991: 3). Burns (1991: 4), for example, argued that the drive for financial

resources “places lower value on other discourses such as the pedagogical, ethical and cultural”. Likewise, Jones (1989) questioned the priority given to financial, administrative and marketing matters to the detriment of educational and cultural concerns of overseas students on campus.

Concerns have also been voiced that, even from an economic perspective, the approach taken is not sensible in the long term. Crevola (1993), for example, has argued that the desire for profit in the short term gives the impression that Australian universities are regarding education as a business commodity and that this has not been well received particularly in some countries in Asia. Similarly, Marginson (1993) declared that universities have taken a short-term approach aimed at raising additional revenue at the expense of building a good long-term educational relationship in the Asia-Pacific region. While Marginson argued that welfare and counselling services for overseas students have improved, he also contended that there has been less adjustment in curriculum design, particularly with respect to Asia-specific content and the cultural sensitivity of courses (Jolley, 1997: 246).

It is also contended (Wirjomartono, 1995: 37) that the previous over-zealous marketing of Australian education has led to confusion about standards of education and has created a negative image of Australian education norms. In particular, there are concerns about possible discrepancies between what is marketed and what is delivered. There is also concern that the commercialisation required to boost numbers of full fee-paying students may have led to a decline in quality assurance.

In an attempt to respond to the various concerns, the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) developed and disseminated a Code of Ethical Practice (CEP) that was endorsed by the Australian government. This Code was initiated to "ensure that the potential benefits of full fee-paying overseas students who choose to study in Australia are fully realised for both the students and the host institutions" (Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, 1987: 1). The Code went on to emphasise the importance of universities paying attention to a number of issues, including care, quality and "the maintenance of academic standards" (Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, 1987: 2). It also indicated to university staff that it was unethical to accept fees from overseas students without making appropriate adjustments to infrastructure support that facilitated training programs and the establishment of support services that were responsive to the welfare and academic needs of overseas students. If one subscribes to such a position then it demands that, among other things, we develop an understanding of the experiences and concerns of those currently working in the field. It is the adoption of such a position that is taken as a justification for the particular study of the TAFE sector reported in this dissertation.

The Research

Throughout the Western nations, issues associated with the increasing presence of overseas students on academic campuses are a result of the priority of the 'internationalisation' of education as a development strategy for the institutions. While most of the institutions in question have identified their potential for cultural, social and economic transformations, their initiatives have, in the main,

been superficial. In particular, despite the plethora of policy initiatives, little research has been undertaken as to the effect of changing policy and practices on students, educators, administrators, or countries concerned. This deficit is serious, given the contention of authorities in the field of 'educational innovation and change' that a first step in any process aimed at improvement necessitates taking cognisance of the views of practitioners, along with an understanding of all the phenomena involved.

TAFE colleges nationally have had a relatively limited involvement in international education and training (Joint Standing Committee, 1996: 119). Recently, however, the curricula of Australian TAFE have become progressively known and valued in countries in the Asia-Pacific region (Shreeve, 1995: 102). Australian TAFE lecturers teaching overseas on secondment and the growing number of overseas students studying in Australia, have given TAFE an increasing body of international market intelligence. Nevertheless, it seems that while the number of overseas students in TAFE has increased dramatically in recent years, the presence of these students in most colleges has preceded an understanding of the complexities of international programs and strategic plans to meet these complexities (Australia TAFE International, 1996: iv). One important step in improving the quality of TAFE programs for overseas students would be to take into account the full range of relevant practitioners' understandings of the current situation. This is the assumption on which the study reported in this dissertation is based.

The necessity of understanding people's contextual realities before introducing changes that hope to improve the quality of education in any context is well summarised by Fullan (1982:2):

In order to effect improvement, that is, to effect an introduced change that has the promise of increasing success and decreasing failure, the world of the people most closely involved must be understood.

It is this perspective that gave rise to the following research questions: What is the background to overseas students studying at TAFE colleges in Western Australia (TAFE WA); what are the present functions of TAFE WA in providing for overseas students who come to study at its colleges; and, what are the concerns of TAFE WA personnel who have had responsibilities relating to the provision of technical and vocational education and training for this student cohort? These questions are a specific application to the TAFE WA context of Fullan's (1982) claim as set out above. In particular, they have been applied in the case of TAFE WA staff providing for overseas students. It is accepted that studies of this nature also need to be undertaken with other groups, particularly overseas students themselves, so that the 'full' picture can be developed. Accordingly, the present study can be seen as being limited in this regard.

In addressing the first research question in particular, data were gathered from files and documents held in both national and Western Australian State archives. More recent files and documents currently housed in the archives of the Department of Training and the Education Department of WA were also investigated. All of these records combined to provide an historical account of overseas students in TAFE WA institutions, especially covering the period from 1950 to 1986. For the period from 1986 to mid-1999, current files, documents and other memoranda

were examined. Records and other information also became available as a result of suggestions made by TAFE WA personnel in the course of interviews carried out in seven technical and vocational education institutions in the State. Five of these were individual TAFE WA colleges. The other two were the principal coordinating body for overseas students in the State's technical and vocational education and training sector, namely, TAFE International Western Australia (TIWA), and the Western Australian Department of Training (WADOT), the government department with overall responsibility and authority for overseas students in TAFE WA.

The second and third research questions were addressed primarily through interviewing selected TAFE WA personnel. Those who provided data included the chief executives of colleges and TIWA, directors of special overseas projects, individual project administrators, heads of international student offices, academic department heads, lecturers, student services officers, counsellors, accommodation officers, canteen personnel, library personnel, and others involved with the academic experiences of overseas students in TAFE. All of the interviews were semi-structured and were conducted with individuals rather than groups. The questions used were as open-ended as possible in order to let the participants choose the dimensions of the questions they wanted to answer. Each of the interviews was tape recorded with the participants' consent.

The study adopted a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1983) perspective and an 'interpretative approach' (Crotty, 1998) to the research, while 'grounded theory' methods (Glaser and Strauss, 1968) were used in the collection and analysis of the

data. Data were coded and analysed using two of the three coding methods of the grounded theory model, namely open coding and axial coding (Glaser, 1992). Analysing data by this method is an intricate process of reducing raw data into concepts that are designated to stand for categories. The categories are then developed and integrated into a theory, propositions or hypotheses (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). This process is achieved by coding data, writing memos, and diagramming. Grounded theory methods have been used extensively in sociology, nursing and related fields. They have been used less widely in education. This study has provided the opportunity to begin to rectify this deficit in the field of students studying abroad.

Structure of the Dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation deals with various aspects of the study. Chapter Two discusses the role of education in development, particularly the part played by technical and vocational education and training in enhancing economic growth in developing nations. The importance of international assistance, both bilateral and multilateral, in contributing to the progress of developing countries is raised, and Australia's general contribution in this connection is pointed out. The strong emphasis on technical and vocational education and training as a vehicle for development assistance is revealed. Chapter Three reviews the main bodies of literature underpinning the study, while Chapter Four outlines the study's methodology. Chapters Five, Six and Seven report the findings of the study. Chapter Eight concludes the dissertation. It consists of a summary of the work, a discussion of the findings of the study, presented in the form of sets of propositions, and offers implications for future practice.

Much of the argument in the literature

The necessity for understanding

The other area where the strengths of the Australian (education) system are being recognised is in vocational training. Australia offers a competency-based approach, transferable skills, training programs developed in partnership with industry, and increasing articulation with the secondary system and higher education.

enabling them to pay to study in formal award courses. Students from many countries in the Asia-Pacific region have taken advantage of Australia's openness by enrolling in VET courses in TAFE institutions. Most (many? – stats required) of these students have come from Indonesia, a large, populous, politically prominent, developing country in South-east Asia that in recent times has also given considerable attention to the development of its own VET sector.Accordingly, it is appropriate to examine the role of TAFE personnel in dealing with international students from Indonesia.

While some saw this as a valuable way of providing aid to developing nations, others perceived it to be no more than a covert search for trade in the Pacific.

The types of institutions involved have been both government-funded and privately managed educational establishments.

While there were only 21,118 overseas students in Australia in 1988, by 1995, this number had grown to 80,722 (DEET, 1996). Consequently, a commercial industry has taken off, and the education of international students in Australia has become

the major component of ‘the export of education services to Asia, which has been one of Australia’s greatest successes in the area of goods and services trade over the past decade.’ (Jolley, 1997:1) A smaller part of the industry at present (but the sector with the best prospects in the long term) is the provision of education services offshore – through affiliated colleges, joint ventures, or the provision of services to overseas institutions. Asia has been the major source of overseas students in Australia and the major destination for Australian international education ventures.

Overseas students bring with them to Australia different cultural and educational backgrounds that affect their academic performance as they seek to adjust to a new country with its different cultural and educational systems. When Phillip’s (1990) wrote of the changing face of education in Australian educational institutions, he was referring in part to the increasing diversity of the clients of these institutions. The changes that resulted from the overseas student policy of 1985 has meant that many students now ‘increasingly come from cross cultural and overseas backgrounds, speak other languages and have had different educational upbringings’ (Phillips, 1990:764)

Quality of teaching has also been raised in complaints by overseas students. Hughes (1995) argues that the reason Australia does not attract substantial numbers of students.....

There is an imbalance in the educational exchange between Australia and Asia that makes us vulnerable to the charge of being more interested in profit from Asia than in understanding it or contributing to long-term regional development.

Each year over 7000 students from Asia come to study in TAFE institutions in Australia.

There is a range of research literature devoted to the encouragement of overseas students to come to Australia,

Research on the phenomenon of international students studying at Australian institutions has centred mainly on matters of adjustment to educational life in the institutions themselves and social and cultural life in the country generally.

There are at least two major areas of concern regarding Australia's involvement with such students.

Yet, Jones (1989) noted that in the existing literature on overseas students in Australia, the educational and cultural aspects of overseas students have been neglected in favour of financial, administrative and marketing concerns. Hodgkin (1972:16) noted, more than thirty years ago, that there was a tendency for foreign students to be placed into "exclusive categories such as 'foreign' or 'Asian'", which often led to "fallacious assumptions about adjustment problems, educational difficulties, and living patterns in the overseas situation." Yet, even more recently, Volet and Kee (1993) still claimed that most literature has given a stereotypical view of overseas students, which neglects their individual differences. Ballard (1987) also highlighted, among other things, the importance of developing an

understanding of the cultures and the educational systems of home countries of these students.

enabling them to pay to study in formal award courses. Students from many countries in the Asia-Pacific region have taken advantage of Australia's openness by enrolling in VET courses in TAFE institutions. Most (many? – stats required) of these students have come from Indonesia, a large, populous, politically prominent, developing country in South-east Asia that in recent times has also given considerable attention to the development of its own VET sector.Accordingly, it is appropriate to examine the role of TAFE personnel in dealing with international students from Indonesia.

While some saw this as a valuable way of providing aid to developing nations, others perceived it to be no more than a covert search for trade in the Pacific.

Phillips' study (Phillips, nd) of lecturers of international students at ANU reveals a series of staff concerns, and informal discussions suggest the same concerns exist among TAFE staff.

In 1995, for students of one country, Indonesia, Australia replaced the United States as the first country of choice for overseas study. While

The internationalisation of tertiary education is just one manifestation of globalisation, an influence affecting almost every industry in the contemporary world economy. After fifty years of international trade reform accompanied by

significant reductions in the real costs and inconvenience of communications and transport, global competition has become a key facet of doing business. Trade reforms have led to firms using the principles of comparative advantage in choosing sources of supply and locations for production. The speed with which such decisions are put into effect has also greatly increased. Advances in computers and communications technology have reduced the costs of acquiring information and exposed markets to greater international influence. Global competition has increased the pressure on enterprises to match world best practice and to undertake continuous innovation. Globalisation applies to an increasing range of service industries as well as primary and secondary industries.

The concept of globalisation is becoming increasingly relevant to education. Educators tend to use the word 'internationalisation' in this context. Knight and de Wit define internationalisation of an education institution as being 'the process of integrating an international cultural dimension into the teaching, research and service of the institution' (Jolley, 1997:22)

Educational institutions in different countries are increasingly engaged in various forms of co-operation and joint activities for the delivery of education. New technologies are enabling education providers to deliver education to many different nations without the students having to travel. Internationalisation also involves co-operation and joint ventures embracing staff exchange and research as well as teaching.

Good practice in the internationalisation of a tertiary education institution is based on a series of organisation and program strategies. The organisation strategy includes the internationalisation of the institution, its mission statements, corporate plans, management and business plans, its organisational structure for internationalisation, its staff policies and its institution-wide links. The program strategies for internationalisation may include international student programs; internationalisation of curriculum and teaching exchanges; offshore delivery of education and international delivery of distance education; international technical assistance and training including short courses and customised training; internationalisation of research and international student support programs.

The internationalisation of tertiary education is beginning to have a profound impact on the management of education institutions and the teaching of students. Increasing competition is a driving force in internationalisation. As a result of this process of enhanced competition, educational institutions in different countries are now beginning to compete with each other for students. Institutions are entering alliances and joint ventures that extend across international boundaries, and a wide range of other service industries, for example, the multi-media industry, are starting to interact with the education sector.

The education sector is no longer immune from the global pressures that are creating the new paradigm for management. The drivers for managerial change in Australian education have been charted by Hoare (Jolley, 1997:32). They include the internationalisation of tertiary education, with moves to develop and deliver

education to overseas student either within Australia or offshore, while continuing to meet obligations to domestic students.

The implications of the above trends are that while public funding (for universities) is coming under pressure, the increasing demand for vocational education is likely to stimulate an overall increase in demand for tertiary education. The winners from this trend are likely to be vocational education, private providers, and tailor-made education and training courses rather than conventional academic university education.

OECD countries throughout the world play a major role as host countries for overseas students. Presently 80 per cent of overseas students are studying in OECD countries with more than 70 per cent coming from developing countries. However, the pattern is not a stable one. In 1991, for example:

In Austria, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland, students from other OECD countries accounted for more than half of the foreign student enrolments.....Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States have relatively larger shares of foreign students from outside the area of the OECD (Wagner and Schnitzer, 1991:277-278)

At the same time, due to the process of globalisation, greater collaboration amongst universities is evident, encouraging the establishment of inter-university co-operation programs. This is particularly the case in Europe and branch campuses are becoming increasingly popular as OECD countries develop stronger relationships with developing countries.

At the same time, a number of countries have broken the mould to some extent. Authorities in Norway have published a number of white papers promoting the

importance of national initiatives in the internationalisation of education. These suggest that more local students should study abroad but they also advocate that an increasing number of students from overseas countries should be encouraged to enrol in higher degree programs in Norwegian universities. The desirable level of overseas students, particularly from developing countries, is stated as being around 10 per cent of the student cohort. However, the policy is not simply to encourage greater numbers but also to emphasise the quality of education.

The current policies of the Japanese government concerning overseas students emerged from a report written by the Council on the Overseas Students Policies for the 21st century (1989), a report that proposed an international student presence in Japan of 100000 by the year 2001. In order to assist overseas students make a successful transition into studying in a Japanese university a number of research studies (Ebuchi, 1989; Ohashi, 1990???) have been initiated to further address a need for:

The development of a conceptual framework and of reliable methods for systematic analysis of overseas students' needs, both academic and non-academic (Ebuchi, 1991:419)

Support for overseas students in Canadian contexts takes the form of welfare and academic support offered to students through counselling services; financial aid in the form of teaching and research scholarships funded by provincial government, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Development Banks and various aid agencies; and through training programs particularly for graduate students.

The National Forum on Post-Secondary Education in Canada in 1987 developed a government policy towards overseas students, the principal objective of which reads:

(Overseas) students are now seen as being a necessary component of post-secondary education. Their present contribution to higher education and future contribution to Canada's international influence is recognised. There is consensus that...an 'open door' policy and support policy for these students should be developed (Department of Secretary of State, Canada, 1989).

This common theme affirming the importance of international exchange permeates contemporary practices in universities in relation to overseas students. However, in most advanced countries, marketing as opposed to the quality of educational programs has dominated the agenda.

Indonesia is a developing country. Throughout its history, Indonesia has been sending and enabling (encouraging?) its people to study overseas in countries like the USA, UK, Holland, Germany, France and Japan, in order to obtain qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience that would ultimately enhance the country's national development. Individual development through education has been a central feature and focus of Indonesia's modern development planning, based on the argument that increased human resource and manpower capability facilitates economic development.

Indonesia's five-year development plans have been designed to achieve a close match between educational offerings and the planners' goals of political, economic and cultural development. This effort has apparently been rather successful.

However, there have been continual difficulties in seeking to channel more students into certain of the needed vocational fields.

Other matters that might require attention in providing a superior service to international students include administrative services

Australian education needs to deal with a number of weaknesses that could impede its competitiveness in the future. These include problems with respect to education quality in some areas,.....and deficiencies in student support services.

Of critical importance is the ability to adapt curriculum to the needs of particular markets. This requires an understanding of the cultural contexts in which business operates in different parts of Asia and their implications for corporate strategies and managerial roles. Research on the phenomenon of overseas students in Australian educational institutions has given little attention to what this means to educators, administrators and others engaged in it.....currently very little literature on practitioners' perspectives on what is a professional.

On the whole, little is known about the educational experience of international students in the TAFE sector. The recent national survey of international students in TAFE (International Student Survey, 1994) provides some nationwide descriptive data on the experience of TAFE international students. Like most surveys however, it does not make any attempt to analyse and interpret the various sections of the results in relation to one another.

Apart from official reports on enrolment figures, background characteristics of students and fee income brought by international students, a significant proportion of the literature on international students in Australia consists of survey studies conducted by support service staff of the institutions hosting these students (Gassin, 1982; Bradley and Bradley, 1984; Burke, 1986; Ballard, 1987; Samuelowicz, 1987, Burns, 1991). Perspectives of Singaporean students reflecting on their experiences has been researched by Volet and Kee (1993), and TOM'S STUDENT (1997). All of this literature concentrates mainly on international, undergraduate students enrolled at university in Australia. In connection with TAFE, Volet and Pears (1994) examined past students' reflections on their TAFE experience and attitudes towards educational exchange between their country and Australia. In 1996, Australia TAFE International (ATI), reported on some ways TAFE colleges and systems were coming to grips with the many issues involved with the presence of international students on campus (ATI, 1996). However, with only a few exceptions, the literature concerning both universities and TAFE generally treats diverse student groups as simply 'Asian' and doesn't distinguish between cultural groups. Furthermore, there is little distinction made between students in discrete academic disciplines. Moreover, very little of the literature conveys the experiences of staff at all levels in academic institutions who contribute to the students' experience in Australia. Within the Asian context the purpose of the study reported in this dissertation is to contribute to the small, but growing body of literature related to TAFE personnel dealing with Indonesian students' attendance at TAFE institutions in Australia.

The transfer of knowledge and skills across cultures should also be an objective of formal courses in Australian TAFE institutions that accept enrolments from both local and overseas students. While it may not be possible to expend this amount of resources on delivering those courses, there is a growing awareness on the part of educators of the need to take cognisance of cultural realities when transferring educational knowledge across international boundaries. It is the intention in this dissertation to tap into these emerging strategies among TAFE teachers and others involved with overseas students.

Despite attempts to monitor the practices of educators in this regard, it remains the case that international education practices remain inextricably linked to domestic policies; policies that today are still very much caught up with the tenets of economic rationalism. At the same time, a new trend is discernible. In 1992 Minister Beazley moved the emphasis on the internationalisation of education towards the need to address more global issues that value the equitable interchange of resources and intellectual property between countries. At this point it remains to be seen what this really means for international students in Australian institutions.

What does appear certain to many Australian educational institutions is that the impressive national increase in overseas students will continue, with the prospects for continued expansion in the technical and vocational education and training sector evident in several countries. However, as Smart and Ang (1992:i) put it:

.....there is some evidence to suggest that to project this point of view into the 1990s may be overly optimistic in relation to some countries. Certainly, if the assumption is wrong, the costs to

institutions are high and this argues for, at least, careful monitoring of trends in our major source countries.

It has been shown that the institutions themselves also need to monitor carefully at least three interrelated aspects of their own on-site operations that will determine whether or not students will continue to come to Australia, namely, the appropriateness of their welfare support, the pedagogical strategies used and the curriculum offered. There will be a more comprehensive literature review in chapter four to examine current thinking on these matters. Meanwhile, from this brief overview of the literature, the purpose and significance of the study emerges, and several research questions arise.

In 1997, Indonesia's resources for higher education were limited, given the external debt at 45 per cent of GDP, and strong demand for other public infrastructure and regional development (Jolley, 1997:166). Also, the public budget for education was still augmented by foreign loans and grants for a wide range of development activities, including fellowships, staff development, research and management improvement programs (World Bank, 1994:4). Indeed, many major educational projects generally depend on funding from international sources.

Jolley (1997:30) maintains that three key management factors, namely globalisation, technological innovation and 'customisation', are remaking the shape of world markets and the nature of enterprises that compete in them. Like the customers from other service industries, would-be students are no longer locally based but drawn from a wide range of countries, are becoming better informed, are able to choose from a wider range of alternatives, and demand

services tailored to the individual or group needs. These trends support the need for a supply process of continuous innovation, greater 'value-added' in manufacturing and service, and employee commitment to continuous product and service improvement and ongoing training. In the face of government budget cuts, competitive advantage for enterprises comes less from the traditional managerial command and control structures, and more from the skills and working relationships of all employees.

Staff in technical and further education institutions in Western Australia have all been subject to the new imperatives imposed on them by the nature of contemporary business. These demands include providing the highest quality product or service designed to meet each customer's particular needs, and competing with increasing efficiency in a highly competitive international marketplace. For TAFE WA staff, this combination may require greater creativity in teaching, a wide range and quality of programs offered, manageable student-staff ratios, reasonable access to core services such as libraries, laboratories and equipment, strong student support services such as housing and counselling, and appropriate, comfortable physical facilities (Jolley, 1997:248). Reductions in any of these areas could affect the quality of the total education experience offered to students and could put at risk the long-term export market.

applied to the particular experience of TAFE WA and its staff in dealing with Indonesian students studying at TAFE WA institutions

In this regard, the study used three major approaches of data gathering, namely interviewing, observation and document study. However, the major source of data collection was the interview.

The interviews were supplemented with observations of a number of practices, including TAFE personnel teaching, interviewing and advising overseas students. Documents, including minutes of meetings, memoranda and other written correspondence concerning overseas students in TAFE institutions, provided further data.