

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCERNS OF TAFE WA PERSONNEL IN DEALING WITH OVERSEAS STUDENTS

Introduction

Chapter Six contained an analysis of the present functions of TAFE WA in providing for overseas students who come to study at its colleges. The carrying out of these functions involves two main groups, namely, the students themselves and TAFE WA personnel. The views of both of these main groups are vital in order to understand the experience of providing technical and vocational education for overseas students in TAFE WA. However, to gain access to these views would require two separate studies. As pointed out in the literature review in Chapter Three, the views of overseas students in several foreign settings have already been the subject of a number of studies, though not specifically in the TAFE sector. Less studied have been the accounts of institutional personnel, especially those in the TAFE sector in Australia, who deal with overseas students. Therefore, it was decided to focus in the present study on this group of TAFE WA personnel. Accordingly, the study is limited to the extent that it does not incorporate the views of students. Keeping this in mind, the present chapter focuses specifically on analysing the concerns expressed by TAFE WA personnel who have had responsibilities relating to the provision of technical and vocational education and training for overseas students.

These personnel consist of four groups. The first of these comprises personnel from the Western Australian Department of Training (WADOT) and TAFE International Western Australia (TIWA). A second group consists of managing directors and assistant directors who make up the senior executive management structure of colleges. The third group is comprised of heads of academic departments, teachers and academic mentors in individual teaching departments, including ELICOS centres, in the separate TAFE WA colleges. The fourth group consists of overseas student co-ordinators and other non-teaching staff in colleges who support the work of managers and teachers.

For ease of description in the following analysis, unless the context specifically requires otherwise, the first group is referred to as 'TIWA' or 'TIWA personnel' (since TIWA is the *de facto* administrative entity that acts on behalf of WADOT in matters concerning overseas students). The second group is termed 'managing directors' (because they are ultimately responsible for each college's internal procedures and practices in matters concerning overseas students). The third group is referred to as 'teachers' (given that heads of academic departments, now called program managers, are recent former teachers who are aware of and involved in the concerns of teachers and academic mentors who provide for overseas students in their departments). The fourth group is termed 'overseas student co-ordinator(s)' (because, in addition to their own functions, they are very often closely involved as 'consultants' to and 'partners' with other non-teaching personnel in the college when they carry out their duties in regard to overseas students).

Taken as a whole, the concerns of these personnel fall into four main categories, namely, 'concerns about welfare', 'concerns about curriculum', 'concerns about teaching' and 'concerns about administration'. Each of these categories of concerns will now be considered. In doing so, allowance will be made for variations between the four groups of personnel and also for variations within each group.

Concerns about Welfare

Proposition One

Welfare concerns are experienced by overseas student co-ordinators, teachers and college managing directors although with different degrees of intensity. TIWA personnel, in so far as they express welfare concerns, do so out of a desire to provide an environment that will maximise profit for TAFE WA, rather than out of a humane concern for individual welfare arising out of the dynamics of interpersonal relationships.

Welfare concerns are experienced most intensely by overseas student co-ordinators.

Welfare concerns are experienced most intensely by overseas student co-ordinators. Their concerns about welfare are concerns principally about the full range of non-academic aspects of a student's experience, including how to support the student inside and outside the teaching environment. Overseas student co-ordinators are most often the first point of contact for overseas students upon their arrival in a college. From then on, many overseas students, especially those in smaller colleges, turn first to overseas student co-ordinators when they feel the need to discuss their own anxieties, both academic and personal. This occurs even when there is in place in the college a support structure that includes teachers,

academic mentors, college counsellors and, if appropriate, TIWA personnel who can be called upon. The wide-ranging functions they carry out means that overseas student co-ordinators take on roles somewhere between academic advisors and parents. The over-riding concern expressed by co-ordinators is that in trying to fulfil these roles, they are sometimes not supported by sufficiently strong or appropriate administrative structures.

Like most TAFE WA personnel who have had responsibilities relating to the provision of technical and vocational education and training for overseas students, the overseas student co-ordinators welcome the opportunity to work in an interesting and developing area of educational administration. They are pleased to be acquiring new skills and employment opportunities in an emerging field, and appreciate that their role in providing such welfare functions is an evolving one in TAFE WA. At the same time, co-ordinators understand that there has not been a considerable pool of experience of dealing with overseas students within TAFE WA upon which they can draw to enable them to identify and then carry out their duties in attending to students' concerns. Several co-ordinators raised some concern that they have been left largely to their own devices in clarifying their roles and responsibilities. The general experience can be described in the following response by one co-ordinator to a question about professional development for her role:

My part-time position in another part of the college was about to finish when this position [of co-ordinator] became available. I just went straight from the old job to this one. The previous person did not have a duty statement; we spent a couple of days together and I just carried on when she moved on. Now the numbers have grown and it's a full-time position; I've just developed it as I've gone along over the last couple of years.

In carrying out their roles, much is left to the creativity and persistence of the people who occupy the roles of overseas student co-ordinators in colleges.

Overseas student co-ordinators are also concerned that appropriate professional development for their role has not been provided in a systematic, coherent manner, in contrast to the way it has been previously made available for more traditional positions within colleges. Almost without exception, co-ordinators have not been specifically trained for their role, either before taking up the position or subsequently. They acknowledge that some TAFE WA campuses are gradually ensuring that all staff receive professional development in attending to overseas students. However, on some campuses such training is *ad hoc*, poorly attended or non-existent.

Some concerns that have their origin in events that occur before they first meet the overseas students who will attend their college were expressed by overseas student co-ordinators. One particular concern is in regard to some of the marketing and advertising material distributed by TIWA and provided by TIWA personnel for overseas students to assist them in making decisions about their studies in TAFE WA. This print and video information is generally compiled and made available in overseas locations by TIWA personnel when they attend marketing and recruitment drives in foreign countries. Sometimes, however, the information is inaccurate or incomplete and leads to subsequent problems for the students, teachers and the overseas student co-ordinators. The reader will recall the situation recounted in the previous chapter of the Sri Lankan student studying for a maritime pilot's licence at one college who sought special assistance from the overseas

student co-ordinator there. The student maintained that, when preparing in Sri Lanka for his sojourn in TAFE WA, he had been advised by TIWA that the course required only eight months to complete. Having arrived in Western Australia and commenced the course, the student discovered that a further four months of practical work was needed in addition to his academic studies for attainment of the licence. Whatever the truth of what the student was told about his course by TAFE WA marketing agents, this mis-match between the student's expectation and the reality, while dealt with efficiently and effectively by the overseas student co-ordinator, nevertheless caused a considerable amount of concern and additional work for her.

This and other similar experiences bring into question the process used to check the accuracy and currency of information materials produced to inform overseas students and to provide them with sound pre-departure academic and general advice. The experience of co-ordinators who work 'at the coalface' with overseas students in colleges, suggests that they need to be closely involved in the process of preparing and checking marketing materials. This is particularly so in the absence of a central curriculum 'research and development department' in TAFE WA that might otherwise undertake the role of preparing and disseminating consistent and accurate curricula.

The concern felt by overseas student co-ordinators is that overseas students who choose to study in TAFE WA after acting on inadequate or incorrect advice, may suffer a lack of confidence in the TAFE WA system and suffer an insecure start in their studies. As Williams (1985) has shown in the case of Britain, there is

evidence that student satisfaction with their quality of life correlates positively with their evaluation of course quality. A longer term effect of poor quality advance preparation information provided by TAFE WA may lead to a student discouraging other prospective students to consider TAFE WA as a suitable destination for their future overseas studies.

When overseas students do choose to study in TAFE WA, one of the major frustrations of overseas student co-ordinators occurs if the students arrive after the academic period has started. Students arriving late in colleges results in co-ordinators being unable to connect with, particularly, first-time overseas students at orientation sessions held especially for them. Since the information to be gained at these events is very important for the students, the orientations need to be repeated, often several times, since late arriving students do not all arrive together. The late arrival of students in the second and subsequent years of their studies is also an acute concern for overseas student co-ordinators. Later-year overseas students understand the TAFE WA 'system' and are better able to assess the effort and attendance requirements needed to pass their studies. They have established contacts among their fellow students who can provide them with notes and information about what studies they might miss by delaying their return to their colleges for the normal commencement of classes. Consequently they are able to judge to what extent they can afford to delay their return to TAFE WA without endangering the gaining of an ultimate pass in their course. Such a situation concerns overseas student co-ordinators who are required to complete various mandatory administrative functions and reports in regard to these students that require their presence at the commencement of the teaching period. This concern

has been noted with Indonesian students in particular, perhaps because the proximity of Indonesia to Western Australia means that it is relatively easy and inexpensive for students to return to their homes for even short holiday periods.

One of the duties that has been taken on by overseas student co-ordinators is to report periodically to TIWA about the attendance at classes and the academic progress of overseas students. This information, particularly the attendance information, is required to enable TIWA, on behalf of TAFE WA, to maintain the mandatory requirements for registration by Federal Government authorities as a provider of technical and vocational education and training for overseas students in Australia. Performing this function well is frequently a concern for both overseas student co-ordinators, as well as teachers. This is because there are often incorrect or incomplete details forwarded to them by TIWA about the numbers of students who will be attending the college. For example, several co-ordinators commented that advice received from TIWA shortly before the start of the academic period of the numbers of overseas student enrolments to expect in the college, often did not accord with the number of students who actually attended. Sometimes the first 'advice' received by an overseas student co-ordinator that a student was to attend her college, was, as one co-ordinator put it, "when the student turned up with a receipt signed by someone at TIWA". This kind of communication gap between TIWA and her college contributed to the co-ordinator's concern about the overall efficiency and effectiveness of TIWA and the extent to which that organisation fully understood or cared about 'how colleges work' and the implications for them of imperfect information given to overseas students.

The need for emergency health treatment for overseas students is another area of concern for overseas student co-ordinators. Since 1997 in particular, according to a number of overseas student co-ordinators, there have been several critical incidents in the health area, ranging from a drug overdose to a potential suicide attempt. Also, domestic crises, general health problems, distress at news from home, and other issues, such as matters to do with the police, often involve the overseas student co-ordinators in their capacity as accessible student advisers to whom the students readily relate. While acknowledging that these kinds of critical occurrences are rare, overseas student co-ordinators believe that there needs to be a realisation that such a happening can arise at any time and possibly involve TAFE WA personnel at all levels, including the college executive management team, counsellors, and teachers. Further, overseas student co-ordinators seem united in their view that health is an area of welfare requiring a detailed knowledge. This knowledge should include clear guidelines and practical advice about how to deal with situations as they arise, especially regarding who can give permission, for what treatment, and what happens if parents cannot be contacted. This information needs to be established and published as widely as possible throughout TAFE WA institutions. Overseas student co-ordinators believe that they would benefit considerably from knowing how to use specialised counselling and other 'social service' techniques that would better equip them in their work with overseas students in TAFE WA. One positive outcome so far that has stemmed from these concerns of overseas student co-ordinators has been that TIWA has developed a list of contact telephone numbers of staff, and also emergency numbers for use after hours.

A practical reality to do with overseas students is that they do need extra support that cannot always be contained within the structures provided for domestic students, according to overseas student co-ordinators. One reason for this is that overseas students start with a considerable academic disadvantage. No matter how good their qualifications upon entrance, they have not grown up in Australia and they mostly have different expectations of education and of how an institution might operate. Overseas students have to confront networks of established relationships, including those brought from high school by Australian students, that are difficult to penetrate, especially when the overseas students are nervous about their language competency. Add to that late adolescent insecurity in social situations and it is understandable that students need assistance.

Teachers also experience concerns about welfare, although not with the same intensity as overseas student co-ordinators.

Teachers also experience concerns about welfare, although not with the same intensity as overseas student co-ordinators. While more directly influenced by the teaching and curriculum concerns which will be discussed later in this chapter, teachers frequently find that they are approached by overseas students seeking advice about non-teaching and learning issues. The concern of teachers is that while they might be able to assist in some way and may be interested in doing so, they believe there should be more mechanisms within TAFE WA to respond to the overseas students' non-academic concerns. If the required systems and procedures are not present, there can be adverse consequences in the academic performance of the overseas student. For example, one teacher of Business Studies was puzzled by the sudden non-attendance at several classes of an overseas student from Hong

Kong who had never previously missed any classes. When the student finally re-appeared in class, the teacher learned that her absence was due to her need to attend the TIWA office, many kilometres from the college, to solve a problem. She had sought a refund for withdrawing from some modules in the TAFE WA course she was studying, on the basis that she had completed comparable subjects in her home country. Lack of information and knowledge of the TAFE WA system for the 'recognition of prior learning' meant that she unnecessarily enrolled originally in all modules listed in the TIWA information brochure for the courses she wanted to complete, and paid full fees for them. When she learned after several weeks in class that the 'recognition of prior learning' option was available to her, she applied for recognition and was successful. She then sought a refund from TIWA, in accordance with the procedure for refunds to overseas students in this situation. However, obtaining her refund from TIWA turned out to be a tortuous exercise requiring several visits to the TIWA office. The process resulted in some distress to her at having to miss classes. It also caused additional work for the teacher in assisting the student to recover the ground she had lost in her studies. Teachers believe that such incidents could be avoided if more effective procedures were in place for assuring that preliminary information provided to overseas students was complete and correct, and, also, appropriate devolution and decentralisation regimes between TIWA and the colleges instituted.

A related issue was raised several times by teachers concerned with the welfare of overseas students. The issue revolves around the question of which of the various personnel who deal with overseas students in TAFE WA is responsible for monitoring an overseas student's progress through an academic program to ensure

all course requirements are met. Most courses are comprised of core and elective subjects. Some elective subjects carry different credit points so that some students may study more and different subjects than others in order to complete their course. The practice is for students to choose their own subjects when alternatives are offered. In one instance, a Taiwanese overseas student was given incorrect advice by a college counsellor about the value of credit points for an elective subject. This resulted in the student returning home unaware that she had actually not completed all the credit point requirements necessary for her to gain her award. She only discovered this omission when she applied from her country for her award to be conferred, and received a letter from the college advising her that she had not completed her studies and the award could not be granted. Her initial approach to TIWA for help and support to resolve the issue drew a similar reply. This was because TIWA, in drafting its reply, relied on advice from a source at a college who confirmed, again in error, that the credit points were as originally advised. Quite distressed, the student sought help by ringing a teacher in another department at the college she had attended. This was a teacher with whom she had formed a friendship and who had gone out of his way to help her in her studies and with general advice during her time in TAFE WA. In providing assistance, and after considerable effort during his holiday period, the teacher was able to confirm that both the counsellor and second TAFE WA officer who had responded to the student's inquiry, had wrongly advised her about the value of her credit points. Over several days, the teacher was able to resolve the situation in the student's favour. The same teacher later became this student's unofficial 'academic advisor' when, after one year back in her home country, she decided to study for a degree at a Western Australian university and sought advice from the teacher about her

intended course of action. This incident points to a need for some kind of central ‘troubleshooting’ mechanism to deal carefully on an individual basis with overseas students and in regard to incidents that arise outside of the standard routines.

Teachers are also concerned that from time to time there are inadequate procedures to cover certain welfare situations. As described in relation to the functions performed by TAFE WA personnel in regard to overseas students, one teacher provided temporary emergency accommodation for an overseas student who came to her home one evening after a serious domestic dispute with her boyfriend. On another occasion, this same teacher related, she was also called upon by the police and welfare agencies when a student became involved in drugs. The teacher was from South Asia and had been an overseas student herself many years earlier under the Colombo Plan. She clearly empathised well with overseas students and had become, certainly for some overseas students, a kind of ‘mother figure’ to whom they turned with their welfare concerns in addition to pedagogical issues. This example is in keeping with Cannon’s (1991) report, based on research in slightly different but relevant circumstances, of the ways teachers related to overseas students. Among the personal qualities that Indonesian students surveyed in Cannon’s study found most important were the teacher’s friendliness and willingness to help. Furthermore, these qualities were more important than how the teachers organised their pedagogic work. This suggests that the TAFE WA network of institutions could, perhaps, consider some kind of future ‘affirmative action’ policy in recruiting teaching and other personnel who will have responsibilities for providing for overseas students in its institutions. Appropriate

qualifications for appointment might include special cross-cultural qualifications or experience.

College managing directors are concerned with welfare issues but with a different focus from that of overseas student co-ordinators and teachers.

College managing directors are concerned with welfare issues but with a different focus from that of overseas student co-ordinators and teachers. All managing directors say they are keen to provide comprehensive welfare support for overseas students in their colleges. The principal concern of managing directors, however, is how to fund welfare activities and provide fully for them. Managing directors in general consider that TIWA does not make adequate provision for payment of the additional expenses incurred in individual colleges due to the presence of overseas students. The general view among managing directors was expressed by one of them in the following terms:

TIWA only covers the departmental teaching component, not other support costs, and needs to provide more to cover English language tutoring and other support. Overseas student activities are only profitable if students are topping up existing classes.

Put another way, in the opinion of several managing directors, overseas students should be admitted only in order to increase the size of existing classes of local students, and not to result in the creation of new classes.

Another managing director expressed similar views in contending that, under present funding arrangements, the overseas student market is not a viable proposition. His view is that if the colleges did not have to add extra resources they could make profits from having overseas students. By 'viable proposition' is

meant that the cost of providing for overseas students is at least matched and preferably exceeded by the revenue that accrues to the college from the initiative.

In regard to providing welfare services, or pastoral care as it is sometimes called, for overseas students, one other managing director affirmed that:

My college cannot do all that is expected of it. No money is provided by TIWA to cover the cost of pastoral care. Extra staff resources are needed but need to be funded. For example, lecturing staff need cross-cultural awareness training and the cost of providing it is substantial.

The managing director was referring to the complexities of managing overseas students in terms of resources, class sizes and general support. He confirmed that his college “regarded overseas activities as a purely commercial activity and if there is no potential for profit in overseas activities we do not undertake them”. In this case, overseas students were not seen as a necessary component in any strategies that might be undertaken to ‘internationalise’ his college.

By contrast, however, another managing director who had many years experience of living and working in education in countries in the Asia-Pacific region before his present appointment, commented that overseas work in his college “is not viewed in totally commercial terms.....since other benefits flow”. He, like another of his colleagues, considered that overseas students on campuses were an essential feature in their efforts to ‘internationalise’ TAFE WA colleges. This is akin to the notion proposed by Kearns and Schofield (1997) and Australia TAFE International (1996). Kearns and Schofield (1997) describe the concept of internationalisation as:

.....not just about offering services to people of other nations. It is also about ensuring that Australian [technical and vocational education and training] students are given the opportunity to learn and experience cross-national and cross-cultural understanding and skills to enable their effective participation in an increasingly globalised world.

The goal of internationalisation should also ensure that TAFE WA personnel are given similar opportunities to develop their skills in the 'international' area as well.

Those managing directors who embraced the idea of 'internationalising' their colleges, commencing with the overseas student program, identified one of the advantages of the program as providing a pool of cross-cultural experience for personnel within their colleges. In turn, this experience was subsequently drawn upon when a college managed by one of these managing directors won a contract to provide education and training in the hospitality area for a Korean-based client. Obtaining this contract meant that teachers in this college needed to develop new approaches aimed specifically at the Korean audience. The general cultural and teaching experiences they had acquired earlier from their work with full fee-paying overseas students had provided them with new insights that enabled them to do this efficiently and effectively. In spite of this experience, however, it is clear that there is not a shared sense of purpose or understanding among key leaders in TAFE WA about the objectives of the overseas student program in TAFE WA, nor is there a consistent definition of 'internationalisation' yet developed in the sector.

Some managing directors were hopeful that the presence of involved overseas students on campus would provide insights for teachers and other TAFE WA personnel that would assist them to relate more strongly to the diverse cultural

groups now emerging in their colleges; groups that reflect contemporary multicultural Australian society. Of concern to these managing directors, however, is that the interactions that they hoped would take place between overseas students and Australian staff and students in TAFE WA colleges, thereby enriching campus life for both groups, are not occurring as extensively as they had expected. The comments of managing directors in this regard echo Volet and Ang's (1998) findings regarding integration between Australian and overseas students in universities and TAFE colleges. Noting that both groups do not spontaneously mix on TAFE college campuses, they conclude that unique opportunities for reciprocal inter-cultural learning and development are not being fully taken.

Two managing directors expressed the view that there is a lot of duplication between TIWA and colleges regarding the provision of welfare services. There needs to be further clarification of the roles of TIWA and each college regarding student counselling, grievance and discipline processes. One managing director pointed to substantial extra costs for his college in providing overseas co-ordinator's salary, overtime and car mileage. He advocated that TIWA needed to increase disbursements to colleges and had forwarded a paper to this effect to TIWA and to his fellow managing directors for comment. This managing director suggested in the paper that he and his peers wanted a clear indication of the level of fees overseas students paid to TIWA and how much colleges could expect to receive by way of a dividend from TIWA to the colleges.

The increasing risk of litigation constitutes another concern for TAFE WA managing directors. The concern may be summarised in the words of one managing director, who asked the rhetorical question:

Who ‘owns’ the student, TIWA or the college, and whose fundamental role is the implementation of ‘best practice’ in regard to providing for student welfare?

The concern developed as a result of critical incidents and issues that arose between March and September 1997, and in response to the increasing risk of litigation by overseas students. Both managing directors and TIWA considered that TAFE WA needed to place itself in a position whereby any liability was minimised by the fact that systems to cope with underage students, critical incidents and general well-being of international students were implemented.

In spite of their concerns, managing directors acknowledged that the general situation in regard to properly providing for the welfare of overseas students was steadily improving. More equitable funding arrangements had been discussed and in one college, TIWA had recently supported building work, including a language laboratory, specifically aimed at improving the facilities available for overseas students. In turn, these improved facilities, paid for jointly by the college and TIWA from profits gained from the overseas student program, enabled the college to tender for the language training component of an international contract with the World Bank. In a sense, as the managing director of the college commented, “when this sort of partnership with TIWA occurs in dealing with overseas students, then you could say that there are actually areas where we have ‘no concerns’ – they give us good expertise that we can use elsewhere”. In similar vein, this managing director also claimed that the need to develop strategies to cater for the

welfare of overseas students had also given him an opportunity to add an ‘international’ dimension to his own managerial skills.

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TIWA personnel, in so far as they express welfare concerns, do so out of a desire to provide an environment that will maximise profit for TAFE WA, rather than out of a humane concern for individual welfare arising out of the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. The centrality of welfare as an area of concern for TAFE WA was noted by the Chief Executive Officer of WADOT. In his capacity as chairman of the TIWA Advisory Board, he indicated as recently as 1997 that the non-academic aspects of an overseas student’s experience in TAFE WA constituted an area that had concerned him for some time.¹ His concern arose from the fact that while data showed significant new enrolment increases, a disturbing note in one particular academic period was a 27% dropout rate, higher than any previous period. The chief executive said that while it was too early to determine the main reasons for the problem at the time, in some initial exit interviews overseas students had expressed dissatisfaction with the area of ‘pastoral care’. This concurred with other anecdotal evidence in his possession that also pointed to ‘pastoral care’ as an area to be addressed in regard to overseas students. The TIWA Advisory Board noted that with increasing numbers of overseas students enrolling in TAFE WA colleges, it was essential that the issue of improving ‘pastoral care’ with a view to reducing the dropout rate, be addressed as a matter of

¹ Source: TAFE International Advisory Board Minutes of Meeting held on 4.6.97: p.3.

priority. However, the question of how to do so still remains a concern for TIWA at the end of the 1990s.

According to TIWA personnel, anecdotal evidence suggests that approximately one-third of TAFE WA's students are recruited by 'word of mouth' marketing. Consequently, providing the most effective welfare services as part of a very positive sojourn in TAFE WA for overseas students is seen as a 'value-added' service that could be used to differentiate TAFE WA's overseas education product from that of other institutions in the technical and vocational education and training sector. In turn, this would encourage students returning to their home countries to 'internally' market TAFE WA to prospective students there as a highly desirable destination. This competitive edge in the market place for overseas students is seen as something to which college systems need to pay greater attention. Consequently, TIWA is concerned to see that colleges adopt a whole-of-college approach in co-operating to market TAFE WA to an international audience.

In addition, a significant concern for TIWA personnel is how to encourage TAFE WA colleges to co-operate with each other in developing skills to provide enhanced welfare services for overseas students at the same time as colleges look for ways to compete with each other. Individual TAFE WA colleges are directed by political imperatives to act as autonomous colleges, in competition not only with private sector providers of technical and vocational education and training but also with each other. However, when seeking to expand its intake of overseas students, each college must act through TIWA because TIWA is the sole

organisation with permission from WADOT to market TAFE WA overseas and to recommend the issue of student visas by Federal government authorities. In undertaking this work, TIWA does not market for and recruit overseas students on behalf of individual TAFE WA colleges but rather carries out these functions for TAFE WA as a networked organisation of colleges. TIWA acknowledges that it is difficult to expect individual colleges to spend their own resources on improving the provision of services for overseas students when the income from the enrolment accrues to TIWA. Nevertheless, TIWA is concerned to see that the colleges should be more vital contributors to the overseas student program. However, in regard to this, one response might be that it is not apparent that TIWA has clearly defined what 'more vital' means in this regard, nor what the overall objective of the overseas student program is. Moreover, many college-based personnel consider that TIWA, as the responsible authority for overseas students in TAFE WA, has the financial and other resources needed to be able to carry out the research and development necessary to devise the best possible form of 'more vital' partnership to bring about TIWA's desired outcomes.

Concerns about Curriculum

Proposition Two

Teachers experience concerns about curriculum most intensely. Overseas student co-ordinators also experience concerns about curriculum, although not with the same intensity as teachers. College managing directors are less strongly focused on curriculum concerns than are teachers and overseas student co-ordinators. TIWA personnel are little interested in curriculum concerns.

Teachers experience concerns about curriculum most intensely.

Teachers experience concerns about curriculum most intensely. The first concern stems from the fact that TAFE WA teachers, including ELICOS teachers, teach a

curriculum intended for the Australian environment. In particular, the ‘mainstream’ curriculum is intended to satisfy the highly pragmatic demands for the development of skills to add to the capacity of workers in the Australian national economy and the local business community.

In addition to this, TAFE WA teachers in certain study areas have expressed concern about the relevance to overseas students of some aspects of the curriculum. The assumptions about cultural background and context that imbue the Australian technical and vocational education and training curriculum are different from those that underpin the existing knowledge, skills and attitudes of overseas students when they come to study at TAFE WA. Consequently, a number of teachers are concerned that the students find some aspects of the curriculum difficult to place in context, hard to understand, inappropriate for their circumstances and possibly, in some cases, even offensive. This causes some strain in teaching for a number of TAFE WA teachers.

One notable example can be seen in teachers in the Business Studies area who teach business law modules. These deal with such legal themes as taxation, corporations, contracts, consumers’ rights, fair trading and insolvency. The curriculum also contains other important subjects relating to the business environment, like the study of Australian government and society, resolving conflicts and negotiation skills. All of these topics are set in an Australian context. Moreover, in teaching this subject matter, teachers indicate that if they try to make the curriculum more relevant or meaningful for overseas students, they need to further keep in mind that different adjustments are required for distinct cultural

groups because of the divergent environments from which they come. For example, business studies teachers report that the different business environments that operate in their countries mean that it is more difficult for TAFE WA teachers to teach Indonesian students about certain business concepts than it is to teach students from Hong Kong, where there is a strong British business heritage.

One departmental head also acknowledged the relative inappropriateness of some elements of the curriculum delivered to overseas students. In the part of the course on 'Tour Guiding', students were required to become familiar with the local area around the college and devise a guided tour of it, focusing on its history, geography, points of interest and unique features. While the module was important to overseas students for the principles that they were able to learn from it about preparing guided tours, the module was almost irrelevant to them in practical terms, because it focused on local areas where they would not be working after graduating. Again, the head of department and teachers engaged in some local 'curriculum development' to alter the curriculum to better accommodate the post-graduation needs of overseas students.

The same head of department also related how some teachers were concerned about the possible pressure they might put on Muslim students completing a 'Wine Service Techniques' module, when the students were required to know various points about wines, including how they taste. For Muslims, consuming alcohol is generally considered to be undesirable on religious grounds and many Muslims do not consume it for that reason. This potential conflict presented some concern for the teachers involved. The departmental head indicated that he had made his

teachers aware of the sensitivities involved in delivering this part of the course, and, together, they had devised some alternative teaching strategies to overcome the problem. However, their more general concern in regard to the issue was to ensure that the requirements of any TAFE WA course containing subjects that might offend or upset overseas students, be properly explained to prospective students by TIWA personnel who marketed the course in overseas countries. This head of department expressed his concern that, as far as he was aware, there was not a solid process in place within TAFE WA whereby teachers could be assured that these types of necessities could be properly dealt with.

Another concern teachers have is that the focus of the curriculum delivered by TAFE WA teachers to all students, including overseas students, is meant to be largely skills-based, rather than a process of providing a broad education for the student. TAFE WA teachers generally feel comfortable and confident that they are equipped to train people for the Australian environment. However, they are less assured, and therefore have some concern, that they possess all the necessary knowledge and skills to equip overseas students to become workers with the specific capabilities they need to contribute most effectively in their own domestic economies after they have completed their studies in TAFE WA.

Several teachers expressed concern that there are some overseas students who really look upon their TAFE WA studies as something of a 'second choice' option after they have been unsuccessful in gaining entrance to university. Consequently, in some cases overseas students appear not to give full attention to their studies in TAFE WA, even though these are a means of not only gaining entry to university

but also perhaps obtaining credit or advanced standing in their degree. This causes some frustration among some TAFE WA teachers. Their main concern is that they do not really know the students' expectations and motivations for undertaking the curriculum they are studying and therefore find it difficult to choose the most appropriate teaching strategies to encourage and enhance the students' experiences. Teachers consider that they, or other appropriate personnel, need to be more intimately involved in offering pre-course counselling and advice to overseas students, and, in some cases to their families, so that the teachers and students can work more closely together for both groups to gain greater benefit from the TAFE WA educational experience.

Overseas student co-ordinators also experience concerns about curriculum, although not with the same intensity as teachers.

Overseas student co-ordinators also experience concerns about curriculum, although not with the same intensity as teachers. Just as the quality of the pre-departure advice that students receive about curriculum concerns teachers, so it is also a concern for overseas student co-ordinators. If the advice is not accurate or is incomplete and a student feels that he or she is enrolled in the 'wrong' course, overseas student co-ordinators sometimes find themselves counselling the student in this regard. On rare occasions, this work might include arranging with academic departments and TIWA for the student to change courses. Furthermore, overseas student co-ordinators have the overall responsibility for ensuring that the appropriate government authorities are notified of the change in students' study programs. These are time-consuming tasks for overseas student co-ordinators,

especially those from a non-teaching or non-educational administration background, or who have not been trained for such a situation.

In this regard, in TAFE WA at the end of the 1990s, not all overseas student co-ordinators do come to the position with a teaching or other relevant background. In most cases, the previous experience and training they have has not necessarily equipped them to advise in detail about academic issues. However, they are frequently the persons in colleges to whom overseas students turn when confronted with academic problems, even those concerning whether or not they are enrolled in a course that meets the real needs or expectations they had before they came to TAFE WA. Some overseas student co-ordinators therefore report their concern about their sometimes limited capacity to advise overseas students on curriculum matters, courses of study and likely outcomes of their educational program. If overseas student co-ordinators are to become *de facto* course counsellors, they considered that they needed more appropriate information and specific training in this area.

Another concern for overseas student co-ordinators is that the way curriculum and course changes are now disseminated throughout the network of TAFE WA colleges and TIWA is not fully effective in the case of overseas students. Teaching networks that have been set up between the colleges over a number of years mean that academic departments are usually apprised of changes so that teachers can include them in the latest teaching program. However, others within TAFE WA who are called upon to advise students about these curricula and courses, such as overseas student co-ordinators and TIWA marketing personnel,

are not always made aware of changes in them, even extending to knowledge of what courses are actually being offered.

A striking example of a concern in this area occurred at one college and was reported by the overseas student co-ordinator. A prospective overseas student was informed by TIWA before she left her home country that she would be able to pursue a second course of study at a particular college following an initial program at the same college. On arriving in Western Australia, the student re-checked this information with TIWA and was informed that the situation as previously explained remained unchanged. However, the information was incorrect because, as part of rationalising its services to the public, the second intended program had been withdrawn by the college from its menu of courses offered. However, this information had not found its way to TIWA. In a conversation with the student during her initial course at the college, the overseas student co-ordinator realised that the student had been given wrong information. So, in concert with the teaching department, she helped arrange an alternative study program for the student. Overseas student co-ordinators believe that these situations could be averted if communication between TIWA and the colleges was made more effective through procedures designed for this purpose.

Overseas student co-ordinators are also concerned about the 'language' used in certain TAFE WA documentation, especially in regard to academic matters. Co-ordinators are often called upon to respond to problems that overseas students have in interpreting some documentation. For example, when describing whether or not students have been successful in their studies, students' statements of academic

record contain terms such as ‘competent’ and ‘hold’ rather than ‘pass’ or ‘fail’ in regard to subjects studied. Use of this nomenclature is part of the contemporary national curriculum requirements in Australia. However, this way of recording results is not familiar to overseas students who frequently question overseas student co-ordinators about how to interpret and explain their academic records. In addition, it is not the current practice within TAFE WA to show academic results in percentage terms on statements of academic record. Overseas student co-ordinators are concerned to see that overseas students have their results displayed in percentage grades rather than just ‘competent’ or ‘hold’. They urge that this is the accepted manner of showing results in at least some overseas countries and is required there when applying for employment and seeking entrance to institutions to undertake further studies. Overseas student co-ordinators expressed concern that students with TAFE WA qualifications could be severely disadvantaged because percentage grades are not displayed, and their country’s universities, which are often highly competitive for entry, do not understand the present grading system

Related to this concern, the timing of sending academic records to overseas students and holding graduation ceremonies for them are occasionally a concern for overseas student co-ordinators. In regard to statements of academic record, a number of co-ordinators reported that overseas students sometimes ask them for help to obtain their academic records earlier than TAFE WA usually publishes them. This is generally because students want to apply for employment or university entrance on their return home. In the case of graduation ceremonies, overseas student co-ordinators believe these should be conducted especially for

overseas students before they return home. This would create goodwill and prestige, and enable students to return home with their award in addition to their academic transcript.

College managing directors are less strongly focused on curriculum concerns than are teachers and overseas student co-ordinators.

College managing directors are less strongly focused on curriculum concerns than are teachers and overseas student co-ordinators. Indeed, in the curriculum area, managing directors are very pleased to be able to use the fact that they have overseas students in their colleges to establish partnerships with universities to develop new courses that form pathways for overseas students to progress from TAFE WA to universities. However, this positive outcome of providing for overseas students has also presented some concern for managing directors. Two managing directors reported that, after a considerable amount of work, their colleges had succeeded in establishing a 'pathway' with a local university. Under the arrangement, overseas students studied for one year at the college and gained advanced standing into the second year of the Bachelor of Commerce at the university. The arrangement worked very well for two years, drawing a solid number of overseas and local students. The course presented fresh challenges and was a significant impetus to the enthusiasm of the students, teachers, and administrators involved. However, after two years, the chief executive of TAFE WA then directed that the course no longer be offered because its objective was principally to enable its graduates to gain advanced standing at university rather than providing the means for them to gain immediate employment. He maintained that, in keeping with the prevailing political imperative for the technical and

vocational education and training sector nationally, because it was not vocationally oriented, the course should not be offered as a TAFE WA program. The decision caused considerable frustration not only to the managing directors but also to teaching staff, particularly because the course was accepted as the academic qualification required for entry to one of three relevant professional bodies. To this extent, the chief executive of TAFE WA had either been wrongly informed or there were other reasons for his decision. In any event, this unilateral withdrawal of the course from the courses offered by the college was a marked disincentive to all involved, including the teachers, marketing officers and others. The concern prevails among them that the existing guidelines from WADOT or TIWA about how to proceed in the future when similar curriculum initiatives are devised in the colleges, remain unclear.

In regard to curriculum, one managing director expressed his concern about the lack of knowledge that exists within TAFE WA about the status and acceptability of TAFE WA qualifications for employment and accreditation to higher education in the students' home countries. Drawing upon his knowledge and experience of working in several countries in South-East Asia, he asserted that it should not be assumed that national TAFE qualifications are recognised overseas for employment and accreditation. He further considered that having TAFE qualifications recognised overseas would constitute a significant marketing tool for TAFE WA. However, he was concerned at what he considered to be the quite fragmented process of curriculum development within TAFE at a national level that did not allow for or pursue the challenge of trying to increase the recognition of TAFE qualifications overseas.

This managing director believed that further research is necessary to learn if it is possible for the Australian TAFE curriculum to be modified to ensure that overseas students could take advantage of accreditation and articulation arrangements in their own country. Further, he urged that if such arrangements were not in place, that they be stimulated there, perhaps by involving Australian embassies and high commissions. The managing director felt that this is an important issue for TAFE nationally, not only TAFE WA. Further, he hoped it would not be long before accrediting bodies, when authorising a new curriculum proposal in TAFE in Australia, would also consider whether accreditation had been sought overseas by curriculum developers. He was concerned that too often those seeking to accredit courses think only about approaching local accrediting authorities. A commitment to genuine quality in overseas education within TAFE nationally, including TAFE WA, must see these issues addressed in a pro-active way. In the managing director's view, TIWA is the TAFE WA institution with the resources and authority that should be strongly urging resolution of these matters on a national level.

A motivating factor for managing directors in providing for overseas students is the hope that overseas students in local classes would provide fresh cultural experiences and insights for local students. As has been noted previously, several managing directors expressed their concern that these interactions do not seem to be occurring. In arriving at this conclusion, however, none of the managing directors had conducted proper research into the issue, but had based their view on anecdotal evidence. This reinforced the need, according to several managing

directors, for further research into the impact of overseas students on colleges, and more widely, the TAFE WA network.

TIWA personnel are little interested in curriculum concerns.

TIWA personnel are little interested in curriculum concerns. The view taken within educational institutions generally is that overseas students choose to come to study in its colleges in order to gain specifically Australian qualifications or a standard of qualification unavailable in their home countries. Consequently, it is felt within TIWA that it is not necessary to modify or adapt a national TAFE curriculum that provides overseas students with the outcomes they are seeking. However, this attitude could be considered as a negative or defensive way of viewing the issue of curriculum and its relevance for overseas students. A more positive approach for TIWA to take, perhaps as part of a national TAFE initiative, would be to sponsor research into how to develop curricula more relevant to the needs of overseas students in order to positively attract them to TAFE nationally, including TAFE WA.

It is arguable that while TIWA personnel are little interested in curriculum issues, they should perhaps be more attentive to such matters. Other groups of TAFE WA personnel, including teachers and overseas student co-ordinators, have sometimes made critical comments about TIWA's overall performance in regard to providing for overseas students. In particular, some among these groups have proposed that TIWA should show greater concern about the quality of the pre-departure and in-country advice provided for overseas students, advice that even after several years of practice, is still sometimes inaccurate or incomplete.

Concerns about Teaching

Proposition Three

TAFE WA teachers most intensely experience concerns about teaching. Overseas student co-ordinators also experience concerns about teaching, although not with the same intensity as teachers. College managing directors are interested in a general way about teaching but not as intensely as are teachers and overseas student co-ordinators. TIWA personnel are only slightly concerned about teaching concerns.

TAFE WA teachers most intensely experience concerns about teaching.

TAFE WA teachers most intensely experience concerns about teaching. Some of these concerns stem from tension they feel in needing to make certain allowances for culturally determined difficulties of overseas students and expecting them to respond to the normal demands of study in TAFE WA. In general, teachers are aware that teaching and learning styles derived from different cultural and intellectual traditions may create problems for overseas students and themselves. They are keen to know more about any strategies and protocols that would or would not be suitable for classroom management where classes include overseas students. Consequently, they are concerned to see institutional support provided for the types of adjustments they and other personnel in their institutions need to make to provide an environment conducive to the overall success of overseas students. One teacher, who was very interested in assisting overseas students, commented that overseas students had a right to equality in the educational process, in the same way as disabled students and other disadvantaged groups.

Following on from this, one social studies teacher who was involved with a college committee investigating how to establish the college as a 'virtual campus' using

the Internet, was concerned to see that the principles of teaching and learning using this means applied to overseas students. The virtual campus concept places the individual student at the centre of a process that provides flexible and individualised learning programs through greater use of modern computer technology. The teacher argued that a classroom-based, question-and-answer approach to teaching and learning, with debate and counter argument, was not necessarily the most appropriate environment for all overseas students, many of whom were probably used to a more didactic tradition. He considered that the present 'pluralist' approach to trying to deliver the best educational experience possible to each overseas student might be improved by placing more emphasis on the importance of each individual overseas student.

Of more general concern to a number of teachers is the need to understand more about the learning systems and assessment methods in overseas countries, compared with those in Australia, and then have the opportunity to apply the benefits of that knowledge in classrooms. Also, some teachers perceive that some overseas students are able to grasp the broad concepts that they are taught more easily than other students. For example, one teacher noted that some Indonesian students in his accounting classes insisted on knowing which was the 'correct' method to use in tackling a particular accounting problem, even though the teacher assured them that either of the two methods demonstrated was equally acceptable in any situation. The outcome of such experiences for some teachers is that they want to understand the extent to which different teaching styles and strategies are needed for different students groups.

Another concern for TAFE WA teachers is that overseas students in their classes do not always appear to have met the entrance criteria for the course. Teachers can be relatively confident that local students have, or have been taught, fundamental understandings and basic assumptions. In some cases, teachers believe that these are not as well understood by overseas students. Accordingly, some teachers question the selection process by which overseas students are admitted to courses, particularly when students are recruited through overseas trade fairs. TIWA personnel usually represent TAFE WA at these gatherings, as part of their marketing and recruitment function. Teachers are concerned to see that TIWA personnel adhere tightly to the selection criteria set down for entrance to TAFE WA courses when considering whether to accept the enrolment of overseas students. In several cases in one study area, it seems that the standards required of students to enrol in the course were either not understood by TIWA recruitment officials, or were not being followed. For the head of the department, his teachers, and the students, there were significant difficulties caused by non-adherence to the entry requirements. However, on a happier note, he accepted that the correct standards now appeared to be applied.

Inadequate English language skills among many overseas students in the classroom constitute another area of concern for many TAFE WA teachers. As Chapter Five of this dissertation has shown, such a concern is one that has been recorded in official files from as far back as overseas students first began attending TAFE WA colleges under the Colombo Plan and as private students. Some teachers consider that the consequences of insufficient English language capability are that overseas students fail to understand their work as well as they should. For

example, business studies teachers often find it difficult to determine if poor written responses to questions about Business Law concepts are due to lack of knowledge or weak command of written English. In regard to English language capacity in general, teachers are able to distinguish between cultural groups. For example, many note that in written assessments at least, Indonesian students are weaker than, say, Hong Kong students. There is added tension for teachers in this situation between the teacher's desire to respond in class to the immediate needs of the overseas students while continuing to maintain the attention, interest and motivation of local students. A number of teachers feel that, in these circumstances, they sometimes need to almost deliver the same lesson twice, once in 'ordinary' time to the class as a whole and secondly to a small group of overseas students who require extra clarification, perhaps at the end of the lesson. This situation is captured very well in Pittaway, Ferguson and Breen's (1998) findings about disadvantages, such as falling behind in the time usually required for coverage of each syllabus topic, suffered by local students that were linked to the level of English language mastery of overseas students.

While acknowledging that often the English language capability of overseas students is a concern, several TAFE WA teachers voiced an added concern at the attitude of a very small minority of their teaching colleagues. This small group appears to hold the belief that if an overseas student with reduced English language skills experiences learning difficulties, then these are caused solely by the student's poor level of English language competency. These teachers believe that the problem should be resolved not by any change in their own approach to teaching overseas students, but by TAFE WA increasing English language entrance

standards for them. However, other teachers believe that the issue needs to be tackled on a number of fronts, starting with achieving greater shared understandings among all teachers that they too need to ‘mind their own language’, in particular, to minimise the use of colloquialisms and slang. If these are used, then teachers need to be aware that they must explain their meaning to overseas students. These issues have been touched on in findings from Lewis’ (1984:108) research, where academic staff he interviewed

.....seemed wholly unaware of any ethnocentrism in their teaching. They considered students’ problems to be at the surface level of the language [with] no mention of the cultural assumptions built into the structure of knowledge put over in their courses.

Given the potential for continued misunderstanding and different expectations in this area, teachers’ use of language in classrooms containing overseas students in TAFE WA merits further attention, perhaps through specific staff development programs for this purpose.

A persistent problem reported by teachers is how to encourage overseas students to participate fully in classes. For example, question and answer exercises in a whole-of-class situation rarely draw a strong response from overseas students, especially Indonesian students. Several teachers remarked that they often asked themselves why overseas students were so reticent and rarely talked to them spontaneously. Some teachers expressed some concern about whether they are doing a ‘good job’ and felt an added responsibility to cater for overseas students in their classes because they had paid substantial fees to be studying in TAFE WA. However, the reason for this may be explained by Mohamed (1997: 165), who notes in regard to South-East Asian students, that they are familiar with well-

defined and structured role preferences, and there is a normal expectation of self-restraint and formality in social interactions.

A concern expressed by one departmental head is that a considerable number of overseas students are unable to complete the course in the normal allotted time. Providing for these students in the subsequent teaching period creates problems for him in juggling timetables to allow for remedial sessions. Also, teachers may need to provide additional instruction or assessments out of the normal order of delivering the course. In regard to the matter of receiving funding for the additional activities, the teaching department is not funded for overseas students who are ‘finishing off’ their courses in this way, under the funding formula applied by WADOT.

As with overseas student co-ordinators, many teachers are especially concerned when overseas students arrive late in the academic period. Late arrival means that teachers need to provide students with the handouts and other materials previously distributed to students who commenced on time. Furthermore, there is significant pressure implicitly placed upon teachers to make every effort to assist late-arriving students to catch up with what they had missed. For example, teachers are offered overtime pay if they hold ‘make-up’ classes. However, even if teachers agree to this option, it does not necessarily solve the fundamental problem, because those overseas students who do arrive late do so at different times. An additional concern related to this issue is that some tensions can arise between teaching departments and the college’s overseas student co-ordinator. Teaching department personnel believe that overseas student co-ordinators, who are the ‘conduit’ of

information about enrollees sent by TIWA to colleges, have a responsibility to advise teaching departments if students will arrive late for the commencement of classes. However, overseas student co-ordinators report that they rarely receive any advice from TIWA to the effect that students for whom TIWA has authorised student visas will be arriving at any time other than before the academic period has commenced. Teachers remain concerned, however, because this state of affairs is disruptive to them at a particularly busy time in their work.

Managers of teaching departments in colleges also expressed concern at the gap in communication that seems to exist between TIWA, the lead agency in recruiting overseas students, and the colleges where they will study. A difficult job departmental heads must complete each teaching period is to prepare a timetable of classes, teachers and rooms. On one occasion, a departmental head received a special request from TIWA about whether he would prepare in his department's timetable for a full class of overseas students that had been recruited in Indonesia. It so happened that enough Indonesian students had expressed interest in a particular course that would allow them to form a separate group. TIWA and a local university had decided to conduct some much-needed research into the group by comparing it to other, more 'heterogeneous' groups in the same course, both at the college and in another college. The manager agreed to the request. However, it transpired that only about one-third of the number of students arrived at the college, all of whom could have been accommodated within the initial timetable. The added work undertaken by the manager of the department therefore turned out to be unnecessary.

An incident somewhat similar to this was reported by a second academic manager in charge of a computing studies department. The manager, having finalised the timetable some weeks earlier and prepared all accompanying documentation, was advised by TIWA that it had accepted a full class of overseas students who would be arriving on the first day of the academic year, which was in the following week. Rooms with computers are a scarce resource in his college and quite elaborate alternative arrangements needed to be made. After considerable 'emergency' re-arranging, the manager was able to provide the students with the full range of facilities and services they needed, but was very concerned at the inadequacy of the internal TIWA communication and other processes that caused him to be placed in such a position.

Students who leave the college to return home for holidays before the end of the scheduled academic period concern teachers. The curriculum content and assessment requirements of TAFE WA curricula mean that it is necessary for students to commit themselves to their studies up to the final scheduled week of any teaching period. This time period also allows for students to sit for 'supplementary' assessments if they have not been successful in previous ones. At the commencement of a teaching period, all students are provided with a teaching timetable showing that attendance is expected for the full semester, including the 'supplementary' assessment week. Some overseas students read this as meaning that they can go home a week or two earlier than the end of the scheduled final week. When they find that they must be present for the final week, they approach the teacher for a special arrangement to complete their academic requirements earlier. Sometimes, the students ask the overseas student co-ordinator to approach

a teacher in this regard. Since the students have already booked an airline ticket, teachers feel that they have been 'blackmailed' and obliged to make special arrangements for them. Moreover, teachers are mindful of the fact that overseas students have paid substantially for their enrolment and are unsure to what extent these 'commercial clients' (rather than 'students') of TAFE WA have a right to seek special such special arrangements in their program.

Plagiarising and copying are issues that can affect TAFE WA teachers in regard to all students. However, teachers note that these issues concern them most often in the case of overseas students. Some teachers understand that the attitude of overseas students about what are unacceptable practices in TAFE WA may be quite different from that of local students because of the different environment from which they come. Nevertheless, teachers are firm in their belief that students must not take advantage of these practices. While Bloor and Bloor (1991) suggest plagiarism may be a compensatory strategy for difficulties in language, and Barker (1997: 115) considers that copying may be construed as co-operation, TAFE WA teachers will not accept either argument. Accordingly, teachers are concerned to see that the TAFE WA authorities at all levels adopt and enforce a process to ensure that there is a clear, unified message given to all overseas students of what is required of them in matters of plagiarising and copying. Even though the overseas students are 'customers', TAFE WA teachers consider that in what they regard as these two related matters of principle, 'customers' also have obligations that mean they should not engage in these practices.

Overall, teachers are concerned about the link between inputs and achievement of outputs in regard to overseas students. They are concerned that they are expected to teach all students, including overseas students, well, but that the concept of 'well' is not defined clearly by WADOT and TIWA. They consider that they are largely left to deal in isolation with overseas students and that there is a lack of definition of their functions in regard to providing for them. In turn, therefore, teachers do not know how they will be appraised, if at all, on their work with overseas students. Moreover, there are some teachers who believe they have special qualities in regard to teaching and advising overseas students, but consider that these special qualities are not taken into account in decisions about permanency and promotion.

Overseas student co-ordinators also experience concerns about teaching, although not with the same intensity as teachers.

Overseas student co-ordinators also experience concerns about teaching, although not with the same intensity as teachers. A major concern for overseas student co-ordinators arises when a student advises them that he or she is having difficulties with the teaching style or methods of a lecturer. This is a particularly sensitive area and one that has not been strongly tackled by the TAFE WA network of institutions. At present, resolution of these sorts of concerns is achieved through the positive personal relationships that generally exist among co-ordinators and academic departmental heads. However, this *ad hoc* situation is not at all acceptable to overseas co-ordinators who believe that TAFE WA must provide a clear vision and sense of direction in this matter.

Like teachers, overseas student co-ordinators would like to know that they are equipped to support overseas students with the sensitivity and clarity that is required. They, like teachers, are concerned that to do this, they need more information on the cultural transition process when overseas students go abroad to study. This information should include advice about cultural attitudes and taboos of the predominant cultures among the overseas students in their care in the college, some insight into typical misunderstandings that might occur. One possible way this might come about, as proposed by one overseas student co-ordinator, is through arranged encounters with community and other groups of immigrants to Australia and their viewpoints that would help overseas student co-ordinators better support overseas students.

College managing directors are interested in a general way about teaching concerns but not as intensely as are teachers and overseas student co-ordinators.

College managing directors are interested in a general way in teaching concerns but not as intensely as are teachers and overseas student co-ordinators. Indeed, most managing directors express strong support and satisfaction with the efforts of their teachers in providing for overseas students. Moreover, managing directors are pleased that because of these efforts, they have developing in their colleges a pool of teaching and cultural capability. They can point to this capacity as a valuable asset of the college when preparing tenders and bids for a range of 'stand-alone' commercial contracts involving educating and training of overseas students. Managing directors express some concern that they are constrained in their efforts to act as independent entrepreneurs in the market for overseas students. They point out that each college is a sub-agent of a government principal, namely, TIWA.

Accordingly, each managing director believes that it is not possible to engage and compete in the overseas student market on generally accepted open-market economy terms. For example, managing directors are constrained in their ability to hire specialised staff to provide superior teaching services for overseas students because of the need to comply with public service stipulations about essential criteria for employment, salary levels and working conditions. If, however, managing directors want to adopt a strategy of internally developing the capabilities of teachers to specialise in providing for overseas students as part of a long-term scheme to improve the college's capability in this area, no 'venture capital' or additional resources are available from TIWA for this purpose. Some managing directors consider that they are handicapped by being bound by a public service culture that was overly bureaucratic, too much satisfied with moderate performance, and offering only 'generic' services. These characteristics are often inappropriate for the individualised, customer-focused approach that needed to be taken towards teaching overseas students. In the political and bureaucratic climate in which they now operate, managing directors are aware of the need to use this kind of approach that is in line with contemporary business practice. Top-line customer service needs to be extended on the basis that clients and customers go home endorsing the experience and thereby, directly or indirectly, help expand the range of future opportunities of repeat or 'word of mouth' business. This will hopefully bring other potential overseas students to TAFE WA and perhaps to a particular college.

Another concern raised by managing directors with regard to the teaching of overseas students is the need to sustain teaching activities once they have begun.

For example, based on the need for him to ensure that activities undertaken in his college were profitable, one managing director was concerned that he might need to close his ELICOS centre because of a declining number of students and therefore lack of profitability from the activity. However, he was frustrated at being unable to learn from TIWA the numbers of overseas students targeted for his college, in both the short and long term, so that he could properly plan for and manage the issue of whether to maintain the ELICOS centre. He was concerned that TIWA markets for an abstract product, namely English language tuition in TAFE WA, but does not market and recruit students for his college's ELICOS centre. Further, his college is precluded from recruiting students on its own behalf, as all recruiting is centralised in TIWA. The uncertainty surrounding the future of his ELICOS centre has made it very difficult for him to attract and hold experienced, competent ELICOS teachers because of the very short term contracts, perhaps lasting as little as a few weeks only, he can offer them.

TIWA personnel are only slightly affected by teaching concerns.

TIWA is only slightly affected by teaching concerns. Once overseas students are recruited, TIWA 'hands them over' to a college, after which the student is considered by TIWA to be the college's responsibility. TIWA expects that after arriving at TAFE WA and being met by the overseas student co-ordinator from each college, the student will fit into normal institutional administrative processes and support structures. By this approach, TIWA seems to be assuming that the full student body will be integrated and that overseas and Australian students will be able to benefit by meeting in the normal processes of institutional life. For example, the thinking seems to be that an existing student accommodation office at

a college can simply be extended to look after the needs of overseas students as well as the domestic ones, and the college counsellor might take on an extra staff member to cope with all students regardless of their origin. There would be no need for additional learning support or language support, because the needs of the students in these areas would have been dealt with before they arrived at the institution. They would have been brought up to 'the standard' of the domestic students. Given these assumptions, it is perhaps understandable that TIWA possibly believes, especially in the early days of overseas students coming to study in TAFE WA, that there is little need for additional administrative or teaching systems and processes to help overseas students in particular adjust to their new situation.

Concerns about Administration

Proposition Four

TIWA personnel and college managing directors experience most intensely concerns about administration of the overseas students' policy. Teachers and overseas student co-ordinators also experience concerns about administration of the policy, although not with the same intensity as TIWA personnel and college managing directors.

TIWA personnel and college managing directors experience most intensely concerns about administration of the overseas students' policy.

TIWA personnel and college managing directors experience most intensely concerns about administration of the overseas students' policy. This policy has meant that since 1987 both of these groups of TAFE WA personnel have needed to develop fresh ways of managing yet another major initiative in the suite of new challenges for TAFE WA that have occurred since then. These changes have

included a greater emphasis on industry as the principal client and end-user of technical and vocational education and training, and the establishment of a competitive market in that sector of education. Managing directors, as heads of colleges, have been required to lead the effort to work very closely with external business-sector bodies in developing appropriate curricula to be taught in their colleges. Then, they have been forced by political pressure to become players in the training market, competing with other TAFE institutions, universities and various private providers for diminishing government funding while struggling with financial and administrative constraints to their competitiveness.

The attempts by colleges to market themselves in the international arena in order to compete in the business of recruiting overseas students have occurred while they have tried to maintain their focus on their traditional core activities. These include fulfilling the needs of local industry by providing trade and vocational education and training, as well as meeting community service obligations. In all of this, there has been considerable concern related to the need to seek a balance in activities between preserving the integrity and professionalism of the educational process and meeting the expectations of Australian industry for training to enable it to compete in a 'globalised' economy.

The concept of 'globalisation' appears to be the rationale that underpins much of the policy-making relating to technical and vocational education and training, not just in Australia but worldwide. However, globalisation is a comparatively recent force for change throughout the major institutions of TAFE WA. It means that TAFE WA is required to contribute to ensuring that the skills of the Australian

labour force are sufficient to support internationally competitive commerce and industry and to provide individuals with opportunities to reach their potential so that they can contribute to that national goal. A concern arises here for managing directors. It revolves around the question of how providing for overseas students, who will return to their home countries after consuming scarce Australian educational resources in studying in TAFE WA, contributes to TAFE WA's work in enhancing the pool of skills available for the development of Australian industry.

The national training policy, resting as it does on the development of a competitive training market in a 'globalised', open-to-the-world Australian nation, presents a contradiction for TAFE WA college managing directors. They are concerned about the conflict inherent in trying to apply a private-sector, free market approach to such a commercial activity as recruiting and providing for overseas students from within the framework of a high-profile public sector enterprise such as WADOT. They are concerned about the barriers to swift, competitive action by TAFE WA that are embedded in such a large bureaucratic organisation.

As noted by managing directors, there is also some irony in the fact that while they are required to lead their colleges in a competitive international market, within TAFE WA, the colleges themselves are not part of a true 'open market'. For example, they confirm that they do not have complete administrative freedom to use their resources to compete with one another to offer a specialised service for overseas students. One managing director was not happy with the airport reception procedures administered by TIWA, especially as they affected students allocated to

his college by TIWA. He felt that he could improve the process and offer a more welcoming service to the students. In this, he was reflecting Lewins' (1990: 85) conclusion that the moment of arrival is of much significance and the experience at that point may colour subsequent attitudes. However, TIWA originally controlled the arrival process for the TAFE WA network of colleges and it required some effort for the managing director to negotiate an alternative arrangement especially for his college.

This same managing director's college was located in a prime tourist area where the college's ELICOS centre had a prominent geographical position in the main shopping area. He expressed his concern that his college was unable to directly accept the considerable number of those tourists who, as part of their sojourn in Western Australia, sought access to the centre to learn English. Rather, the students needed to travel quite a distance into the centre of Perth to register at TIWA, which then charged a significant administration fee to the college for this service. The managing director was concerned that in such matters his college should have been allowed to act more autonomously.

A recent federal government report (House of Representatives Standing Committee, 1998) considered that 'commercialisation' and 'internationalisation' are to be the way of the future for TAFE systems nationally, provided they maintain their focus on their core technical and vocational education and training activities and the needs of local industries. One concern in connection with this aim among TAFE WA managing directors is that the drive to 'commercialise' and 'internationalise' the education and training offered by TAFE WA may swamp the

traditional mainstream courses that it has provided for almost a century. This is just one aspect of a wider, more fundamental problem perceived by managing directors. This issue revolves around how they should address commercialisation issues within the TAFE WA network, especially, how to strike a balance between mainstream and commercial activities, such as the overseas students' program, while encouraging and maintaining morale across whole colleges in a time of ever higher expectations of them.

College managing directors are concerned that WADOT has not identified clearly and fully the activities that should comprise core or mainstream TAFE WA provision. They believe that WADOT's requirements of colleges in regard to planning and reporting its activities in terms of the outcomes that result had not been adequately defined, and accountabilities and responsibilities at several levels in TAFE WA have been confused. According to managing directors, if they are to do their part in achieving this objective, they need clearer network-wide policies and procedures within the TAFE WA system to facilitate their efforts. Also, managing directors were concerned that key elements in the network of TAFE WA institutions were not working well together in providing for overseas students. Their general view among managing directors was that the separate elements in the network did not represent a complete, comprehensive strategy but rather a loosely connected set of relevant policies.

According to several college managing directors, WADOT, and to a less extent, TIWA, had not positioned themselves strategically by undertaking the essential 'internal marketing' that was required to devise, proclaim and sell the strategic

plan that underpinned the entire enterprise of overseas students. Clear goals, clear means and clear outcomes are required. Objectives at present are imprecise or obscure and do not form a satisfactory base upon which to build practical strategies.

In this connection, college managing directors are concerned that TIWA, as the designated manager of the overseas student program, should provide detailed identification, specification, measurement and reporting of outcomes expected of their colleges. They also look to TIWA to set out the characteristics of the linkages between TIWA, their colleges and other agencies in working towards achieving those outcomes, and appropriate structures and processes to support the work towards achieving those outcomes. Managing directors require these things so that the systemic outcomes sought for the TAFE WA sector can be incorporated into each college's strategic objectives, and indicators of performance drawn up for individual teaching and other departments within colleges. Decisions about these can then form the basis of resolutions to allocate financial resources from within both TIWA and each college to marketing, professional development, resources development and other programs aimed at enhancing the provision of an educational experience for overseas students. Finally, appraisal of the subsequent performance of personnel and of sections can be made and new operational and strategic decisions can be designed to enhance the work of the college.

Managing directors are concerned about the fluid nature of the policy environment within which the technical and vocational education and training sector operates. The different nature of policy settings between and within the Federal and State

spheres of influence add a further layer of complexity to the overall picture. Managing directors urge that when making policy about the overseas students program within TAFE WA, there needs to be a blend between the actual experience of those who have had actual responsibilities in providing for overseas students and those who decide policy-making. In particular, managing directors are concerned to have instituted the forms of collaborative governance and administration that would best motivate all personnel who work in the TAFE WA system, especially teachers and overseas student co-ordinators in their colleges.

Managing directors are concerned to see established the most effective relationship between colleges and TIWA, and between themselves and their teaching staff with regard to providing for overseas students. The documents accompanying the legislation that established TIWA as a government body failed to identify the respective rights and responsibilities of TIWA and colleges in relation to their dealings with each other and did not prescribe a process for day-to-day operational matters and for resolving grievances. In the current relationships, managing directors are concerned that there is not enough focus, within the whole effort of providing for overseas students within TAFE WA, on the perspective of managing directors, teachers and overseas co-ordinators who could be considered the 'engine room' and driving force of TAFE WA. For these three groups, motivation could be increased by greater input into policy-making and adequate recognition of their professionalism in the specialist area of providing for overseas students.

Managing directors agree that such a collaborative approach throughout the TAFE WA network would also assist in alleviating the concerns that they have about

offshore marketing for overseas students. They consider that there needs to be more information about proposed overseas marketing trips by TIWA, so that there could be more synergy and efficiency of marketing efforts involving both the colleges and TIWA. Managing directors hold the view that colleges need to be allowed an increased involvement in offshore marketing activities through attendance at offshore promotions. They are concerned about the quality of information provided by those TIWA personnel who do not have a background in education but are appointed to devise marketing strategies and attend overseas marketing projects on behalf of TAFE WA. One managing director reflected the views of his peers in affirming that there is a need for a full 'overseas activities' business plan. To paraphrase White, Martin, Stimson and Hodge (1991: 200), the essence of good marketing lies in a real belief running throughout the whole organisation in giving the customer value for money and offering dedicated service as well as good quality services. It is a total approach to an activity or program and in that way should permeate everything.

Such an approach would cover the collective overseas business of TAFE WA, as well as how the various TAFE WA institutions should try to gain access to the market and identify commercial opportunities there. The overseas marketplace is considered to be a complex environment by most managing directors. They believe that there is a strong need for colleges to try to expand the range of their education services, including the overseas students' program, to an overseas audience. They are concerned that their middle-level managers become better able to interpret and manage overseas business. Becoming more closely involved in

TIWA's marketing effort would assist this objective, in the opinion of several managing directors.

For its part, TIWA has proposed that, together with TIWA marketing staff, college representatives have an increased involvement in offshore marketing activities through officiating at overseas graduations, attendance by college academic leaders at offshore promotions, at exhibitions, and at TAFE WA graduate/alumni social meetings. However, at the end of the 1990s, managing directors reported that there is still not an established process for funding these activities, and that very few of their staff had been approached to accompany TIWA personnel on the many overseas marketing trips and other excursions that have taken place. It is possible to detect a difference in attitude among managing directors about what they perceive TIWA wants and what the colleges believe they need in regard to the overseas student program in TAFE WA.

The managing director of TIWA expressed his concern that the culture of commercialisation and the drive to internationalisation did not yet seem to have totally permeated the college system. However, college managing directors responded by voicing their anxiety that WADOT had not clarified the aims and objectives of commercialisation and internationalisation in TAFE WA, nor given clear guidelines on what is expected of colleges in this regard. They believe that in the specific matter of overseas students paying full fees to complete conventional TAFE WA certificates and diplomas, TIWA also had not spelled out for colleges the aims of this program and outcomes expected. Managing directors consider that TIWA, as the authority appointed by the Western Australian Department of

Training in regard to providing for overseas students, has not paid sufficient attention to the management of the fundamental organisational change that came with carrying out this responsibility.

TIWA personnel are concerned that the colleges seem to be pursuing different costing models, making comparison of the profitability of overseas student activities difficult. Furthermore, there is a concern that few colleges are 'on top of' their costing models. However, managing directors in colleges are not concerned that this is a true view of reality in all colleges nowadays. Rather, the position of managing directors is that an absence of clear direction and guidelines from TIWA about financial matters and costing models in the earlier days of overseas students had led to such a belief by TIWA. Nevertheless, managing directors do feel that colleges were becoming more sophisticated in their accounting and costing systems.

It is somewhat of a concern that the managing director of TIWA and the managing directors of colleges hold these diverse views in regard to such a vital process as financial administration of the overseas student program. This is because, fundamentally, most of the concerns of managing directors about the overseas students program have much to do with the need to properly fund the activity in colleges. In the current political climate in Western Australia, the prevailing view taken by college managing directors is that every education and training initiative, including the overseas student program, must be 'self-supporting'. This means that each activity offered by a college must pay for itself and hopefully contribute a financial surplus to the college's overall profitability. This requirement, which

reflects the current policies that govern the TAFE sector in Australia, perhaps best sums up the main underlying reason for the concerns shown by managing directors.

Managing directors of both TIWA and the colleges consider that a fundamental concern in regard to providing for overseas students is the problem that arises out of the 'Executive Order' and 'Briefing Paper' that accompanied the legislation to establish TIWA as the sole TAFE WA entity licensed to recruit overseas students. The problem relates to the relationship between TIWA and the TAFE WA colleges. One effect of the supporting documents was to establish procedures governing this relationship, including handing TIWA the function of promotion, marketing and recruitment of overseas students and not allowing the individual colleges themselves to undertake this endeavour. That is, TIWA holds the registration required to undertake these functions, not individual TAFE WA colleges, which feel that they must wait for TIWA to act to give direction about providing for overseas students, which inhibits the college's ability to engage in its own creative marketing.

In their concerns outlined to this point, college managing directors agree that TAFE WA's involvement with overseas students could be much improved with a clear strategic business plan that would provide a sense of vision and direction about the program. However, the initial TIWA Business Plan, prepared in 1997, which it might be thought would provide some of the responses to these hopes, is itself a source of concern for managing directors. In particular, they note that the document was prepared by TIWA without reference to them or those 'at the

coalface' in providing for overseas students in their colleges. Perhaps not surprisingly, managing directors were highly critical of the document. For example, they considered it deficient in that it covered a one-year period only and did not reflect how TIWA would work with the colleges. They wanted the plan updated to a three-year plan so that colleges could then use it to plan strategies for their own activities and also avoid duplication of effort. They reinforced the urgent need to work on the relationship between TIWA and the colleges, in particular to define and strengthen roles, for the mutual benefit of both sets of institutions. Managing directors were also concerned that the business plan lacked details of the commercial processes that underpinned TIWA's strategies in regard to the marketing and recruitment of students, and providing colleges with support to cater for them.

Further to the Business Plan, one college managing director commented that there are few quantifiable measures in it. For example, he is concerned that there is no measurement of the quality of service in pastoral care, nor any specification of the facilities that would need to be used or developed to provide these services. He noted that the Plan does not contain a clear indication of targets of the numbers of students expected in the future at their colleges and the level of fees that this might bring. It is not certain from the Plan if TIWA planned to allocate any students to his college in future years. This uncertainty restricted his college's ability to plan strategically and operationally, including in the areas of recruiting and training staff and financial budgeting.

Another issue that has seen considerable tension between TIWA and the colleges is in regard to how TIWA would allocate future commercial opportunities to colleges. In areas where colleges have obvious unique capability, such as being the sole college to run a specialist program, this is not a concern. However, in study areas that are common to all colleges, including country colleges, allocation of overseas students is indeed a concern. This is because a large number of overseas students, having arrived in Western Australia and explored both the geographic and TAFE WA environments, decide that they want to study at the college of TAFE located in the centre of Perth, the capital city. This is a particular concern expressed by regional and also some outer-suburban colleges. In the centralised TAFE WA system, these more outlying colleges attract very few, if any, overseas students into ELICOS or mainstream courses. Regional colleges are excluded from the major area of focus of TIWA, whose response is that it 'needs to supply what the customer wants'. The large overseas student numbers being attracted into metropolitan colleges provide a base upon which to build a higher profile to attract future overseas students to that college. If it is desired that TIWA is not seen exclusively as a support organisation for metropolitan colleges only, then overt policies of inclusion in regard to providing for overseas students need to be endorsed in favour of regional colleges, according to their managing directors.

Overseas student co-ordinators and teachers also experience concerns about administration of the policy, although not with the same intensity as TIWA personnel and college managing directors.

Overseas student co-ordinators and teachers also experience concerns about administration of the overseas students' policy, although not with the same intensity as TIWA personnel and college managing directors. Many TAFE WA

teachers, especially some of long standing, have expressed concern at the number and rapid pace of changes that have taken place in their work since 1987. Some of this concern centred on the perceived inadequacies in institutional management in response to the new challenges constantly emerging in TAFE WA, of which the overseas student program is a prominent one. Many TAFE WA teachers generally believe that the overseas students' program is a positive initiative from an educational, economic, social and cultural perspective. However, significant numbers of teachers of overseas students are not sure of what they are expected to achieve in teaching overseas students. They consider that while the program has grown significantly, since 1994 in particular, most of the students are concentrated only in a limited number of academic departments. Thus, many people outside those departments, both staff and students, are only vaguely aware of the presence of the students on campus. Accordingly, a small number of teachers of overseas students commented on the problem of gaining acknowledgement of the effort and skill they have shown in providing for overseas students in their classrooms. This is perhaps not surprising because, as one teacher put it, "you only hear anything about your work when things go wrong, but very rarely when you do a good job". This teacher confirmed, however, that his comment was not limited just to the situation involving overseas students but rather reflected a concern about the very restricted extent to which classroom teaching is formally recognised within the TAFE WA system.

Teachers also note that an increasing number of managing directors and other senior decision-makers in colleges do not come from a teaching background. Several of the new generation of managing directors appointed in 1994, about the

same time as larger numbers of overseas students began to enrol in TAFE WA colleges, came from the world of business and commerce. In the perception of some teachers, a growing number of contemporary administrative personnel, including several managing directors, do not have the breadth or depth of understanding about the complexities and necessities of life in the classroom. The key determinant of how these 'educational entrepreneurs' manage colleges is, as teachers see it, increasingly economic, rather than educational or social. In connection with the management of the overseas students' program, as with other contemporary activities in colleges nowadays, teachers are concerned to see that their views remain heard and valued.

In general, teachers are concerned to see that the total experience of the sojourn of overseas students in TAFE WA will be enhanced by a 'life-cycle' (Harris, 1997: 37) approach taken by TAFE WA in providing for them. This approach starts prior to a student's arrival and incorporates a period after he or she has returned home. Such an approach needs to be built on a culturally-sensitive, strategically-minded, effective and efficient administrative apparatus built and operated through a close, collaborative partnership between TIWA and individual colleges. Teachers are confident that if well-managed administrative conditions are present in the environment that surrounds their work in classrooms, they will have the time and other support they require to develop and apply the pedagogical strategies that constitute arguably the most important element in providing for overseas students in TAFE WA.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter focused specifically on analysing the concerns expressed by TAFE WA personnel who have had responsibilities relating to the provision of technical and vocational education and training for overseas students. These personnel consist of four groups, namely, 'TIWA', 'managing directors', 'teachers', and 'overseas student co-ordinators'. The concerns of these personnel were organised into four main categories, namely, 'concerns about welfare', 'concerns about curriculum', 'concerns about teaching' and 'concerns about administration'.

Each of the four groups of personnel had experiences that can be classified in the four categories of concerns, although with varying degrees of intensity, depending on the different motivations and 'world view' they held. Also, variations were identified within each group in terms of the way in which they experienced the concerns.

Again, however, it is necessary before concluding this dissertation to recall the point made at the end of the last chapter, namely, that overseas students come from many and varied cultures and thus may have different needs. Therefore, in carrying out that portion of the research reported in this chapter, an attempt was made once again to ascertain whether or not TAFE WA personnel had concerns that were culture specific. They were given ample opportunity to expand on any thoughts they had in this regard. Again, however, no major concerns unique to students from different cultural groups were reported. Once more, this points to an area of further deliberation for the future.

For example, it has provided them with the opportunity to respond to pressures for educational change by initiating transformations in their organisations. The presence of overseas students provided a means of acquiring some cross-cultural

experiences to draw on when negotiating for fee-for-service courses with international institutions for work in that country. In this connection, college managers can now point to cross-cultural teaching experience within their colleges in the form of lecturers who taught overseas students in courses across the spectrum of those available in TAFE WA. It follows then, that overseas students have given lecturers new experiences of teaching students from different cultures. Consequently, this experience has provided insights for teachers and administrators for accommodating the growing diverse cultural mix emerging rapidly in Australian society. Furthermore, it has brought home to teachers the need to consider different teaching techniques and focus on micro teaching styles. For curriculum planners, the presence of overseas students has highlighted the need for continuing curriculum research and development. These needs can be thought of in three ways. In curriculum development, it led to new courses that formed part of pathways with universities. Second, if education and training through TAFE WA is intended to equip students with knowledge, skills and attitudes that will make them more effective and efficient in the workplace, then for local students, interaction with overseas students provide valuable insights of different cultures. Furthermore, curriculum planners (and teachers) are able to incorporate 'overseas' material in courses and classes. The principle of providing knowledge of the local environment in the delivery of the curriculum will also then be fulfilled to some degree in regard to overseas students. In delivering this contemporary curriculum teachers need to undertake the right kind of professional development to fully understand and prepare for the changes. This professional development will be based not only on updating knowledge of course content, but also about different cultural sensitivities and needs to be recognised when adopting

techniques for teaching foreign students with different learning styles in classrooms. A small number of lecturers have tried to ‘play on’ the different cultural backgrounds of the students in their classrooms in trying to generate discussion and enrichment among all students. The presence of overseas students has increased the range of jobs available within TAFE WA, not only in colleges but also in the newly established TAFE International Western Australia. On a personal level, many staff have gained new cultural insights that have led several to visit countries that they might otherwise not have done. For researchers into TAFE and the vocational education and training area, the advent of overseas students has opened up new lines of inquiry for investigation. Overseas students who have attended TAFE WA institutions constitute a network of contacts and advocates (OR NOT) in various countries. It has brought Asia into the TAFE WA mind. It has brought physical changes to campuses with ELICOS students and new services such as prayer rooms and the menu at the canteen. Overseas educators now visit TAFE WA institutions. It has brought income into colleges. It required new skills of academic management and administration, including establishing links with other educational institutions, such as universities, and international agencies, such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, AusAid and Unesco.

ALSO: Notion of finding out how to deal with customers/clients and customer service.

Further, there are statements in formal policy and strategic-directions documents that explicitly or implicitly endorse the ‘policy’ (REF – Environmental Scan). Moreover, there appear to be very few statements on the public record within

TAFE WA that directly or indirectly show opposition and dissent to the worth to TAFE WA of adopting and following such a 'policy'. To this extent, therefore, there are many aspects of the collective experience of overseas students that can be classified as areas of 'no major concern' for TAFE WA. That is to say, the 'ends' of the policy of having overseas students in TAFE WA appear to meet with general approval.

In spite of the apparent wholehearted 'public' acceptance by TAFE WA managing directors of the policy of accommodating overseas students, there are indications that some serious reservations may be held privately.

The initial political decision that the TAFE WA system would accept overseas students appears to have been endorsed by managing directors. This conclusion may be drawn because of the absence of negative reactions from among their number to the policy. For managing directors in colleges, the challenges of accommodating overseas students have provided an opportunity for these leading decision-makers to develop a fresh set of educational administration skills themselves, and provide opportunities for others in colleges to do so also. The new skills, attitudes and opportunities brought by overseas students in their workplaces are among those mentioned most often by TAFE WA personnel at all levels as the generally accepted principal benefits of the presence of overseas students.

In discussions on the 'demand side' of the market, the need for greater efficiency and for cost savings arises. Buyers/consumers are invariably defined in industry

terms with little or no regard for the social objectives of public policy or the students or trainees. (CONFLICT HERE BETWEEN OBJECTIVES OF INTERNATIONALISATION ETC.)

Another concern that was evident (Kath White) was that stated by several managing directors and ELICOS Centre managers. They had a significant number of overseas students coming to their colleges and centres direct, seeking to enrol and also had been approached by universities who wished to contract her college to deliver the first year of their course. Kath sought clarification of her college's ability to offer the first year of undergraduate degree programs for overseas students, on contract from a university. Tony Tate advised that his college also has overseas tourists calling directly into his college's ELICOS centre. However, the licence for delivery of courses rests with TIWA. Therefore, TIWA must be involved, particularly for its responsibility for visas and pastoral care.

According to the managing directors, the plan should include each enrolling period, the provision of timely advice from TIWA about basic issues for educational planners in colleges, such as: the number, by country of origin and study program, of overseas students that are targeted to be enrolled at their colleges in each enrolling period, what financial and other resources will be provided to assist them to accommodate these students, what standards of performance are to be applied to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of the performance of their college in accommodating the students, what sanctions follow and what rewards or incentives accrue for failing to meet or exceeding the performance indicators, what kinds of post-course evaluations are conducted by central TAFE WA authorities

(TIWA) before students return home, what are the expectations of the students and their parents of the educational experience they are undertaking in TAFE WA. The information sought is often not forthcoming, late or inaccurate or incomplete when it does arrive.

Consequently, managing directors have been concerned about coming to grips with new, more enlightened management practices for the changes required to provide for overseas students to be successfully introduced into TAFE WA.

There is a range of attitudes among TAFE WA lecturers to the function of providing an appropriate curriculum for overseas students. The range extends from indifference to the issue, through spasmodic unstructured and unsystematic attempts to modify speed of speech and type of language used, to the special efforts some lecturers make in preparing special lists of terms and arranging special tuition in these 'problem' curricula for overseas students.

However, another managing director who was faced with the same issue felt that the ELICOS centre should be maintained because of its central role in 'internationalising' his college. The threat of closures because of inadequate numbers and therefore an lack of commercial viability without the ability to control the inputs to the process is a difficult situation for managing directors.

Even among those managing directors who are philosophically favourably oriented towards having overseas students studying on their campuses, the view was that accepting overseas students should only be undertaken if they provide a profit for

the college. This view is entirely understandable because the imperative that most governs their continued re-appointment to their position is the need to manage a financially profitable education institution. The concern among these managing directors is that there is no credit or advantage to be gained by them in continuing to run an overseas student program for non-financial reasons alone, even if they consider there are substantial non-financial, general educational benefits that will ensue. Indeed, they several feel strongly that to do so would count against them when the question of re-appointment arises.

This situation points to deeper concerns among managing directors. In one way or another, it is reasonable to claim that these concerns ultimately affect and are tightly bound up with the suite of concerns about welfare, curriculum, teaching and administration expressed by the different groups of TAFE WA personnel who have responsibilities for providing technical and vocational education and training for overseas students. For example, managing directors are concerned about the 'dividend policy' in relation to the amount disbursed to colleges from the income collected by TIWA from overseas students. In turn, this concern is part of and related to another larger issue for managing directors, namely, the need they see for their colleges to have a greater degree of autonomy from the central office of WADOT in resource management, including financial and physical resources and personnel.

Concerns among TAFE WA managing directors about the welfare of overseas students is just one aspect of a wider fundamental problem they have, namely, how to address commercialisation issues within the TAFE WA network. An initial

concern in this regard is to see TIWA establish the aims and objectives of the suite of commercial enterprises, prominent among which is providing for overseas students in colleges, within the TAFE WA system generally. In turn, this leads to another problem that concerns TAFE WA managing directors, namely, how the almost overwhelming concern regarding commercialisation that exists within the TAFE WA system can be reconciled to the on-going objective of providing traditional or mainstream services, such as certificates and diplomas.

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11th January, 2000

Dr. Alan Mitchell
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Dear Alan,

It's Mike Brennan, an old colleague from TAFE here. I don't know if you remember me but I was at Albany, Rockingham and Beaconsfield when you were Principal or Managing Director there. You very kindly granted me permission to go off to Indonesia to work for AusAid when we were at Rockingham and I remember telling you on my return in 1993 that I was going to do a Doctor of Education degree (as you had done in Canada) at UWA. It's in connection with that that I am writing to you now, to ask you if you would be prepared to be nominated to examine my doctoral dissertation, which I expect to finish by the end of February.

My supervisor at UWA is Dr. Tom O'Donoghue who was also Nic Gara's supervisor. Tom recently asked me if I knew you and commented that he was very pleased with your approach in examining Nic's dissertation. My work is about 320 pages long and deals with three issues: the background to Indonesian students coming to study in TAFE WA, from the time of the Colombo Plan to the present day; the present functions of TAFE WA in providing for such students; and the concerns of TAFE WA personnel who have had responsibilities for providing for them.

This is just an informal contact by me at this stage. Would you kindly contact me by 'phone or by email to let me know your thoughts on being nominated. In any event, it will be good to talk to you again and learn what you are doing nowadays.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you Alan and my best wishes,

Even more, however, managing directors were concerned about how thoroughly senior executives within WADOT and TIWA, who were responsible for the relevant policy research and development within the TAFE WA network, actually comprehended the true nature of the 'business of overseas students' and thus the context within which policies and strategies about the overseas student program needed to be formed.