

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

#### **Introduction**

Although students have been coming to Australia from other countries since soon after the nation's federation in 1901, the numbers have risen markedly since 1987. Before 1987, the majority of overseas students in Australia were either supported by international aid programs, such as the Colombo Plan, or effectively subsidised as the fees charged did not cover the costs of their education. Also, there were quotas on the number of students allowed to enter Australia under these measures. Nowadays, however, most overseas students in Australia pay full fees. This growing phenomenon is one that has attracted a solid body of research incorporating a broad range of topics and issues. Nevertheless, much more research needs to be undertaken.

Most overseas students have come from Asia (Baker, Robertson, Taylor and Doube, 1996). Also, most have come to study in universities. However, particularly since the early 1990s, increasing numbers have enrolled in the mainly publicly funded colleges and institutes of technical and further education, known as 'TAFE'. This is a sector where there have been calls for the undertaking of an increasing number of empirical studies from the qualitative research perspective, particularly for studies that will increase our understanding of the phenomenon of overseas students from the perspective of the people involved. These people

include those who provide for overseas students during their sojourn in a foreign country. The study reported in this dissertation is one response to this call.

This final chapter of the dissertation opens with a summary of the study. Secondly, sets of propositions that arose from the study are presented. Thirdly, implications that flow from the propositions are outlined.

### **Summary**

The study reported in this dissertation set out to develop certain understandings in relation to overseas students studying at TAFE colleges in Western Australia. These understandings were embodied in three particular aims. The first aim was to develop an understanding of the background to overseas students studying at TAFE colleges in Western Australia. The second aim was to develop an understanding of the present functions of TAFE WA in providing for these students. The third aim was to develop an understanding of the concerns of TAFE WA personnel who have had responsibilities relating to the provision of technical and vocational education and training for overseas students.

The focus of the study was on TAFE institutions in Western Australia and the personnel in them who deal with overseas students. There were three main institutions included. First, the Western Australian Department of Training (WADOT), the government department with the overall responsibility for managing technical and vocational education and training in the State, was included in the study. The second institution in the study was a special agency

known as TAFE International Western Australia (TIWA) which was established by WADOT to administer and direct the overseas student program on behalf of, and in, colleges of TAFE WA. The third institution involved was the TAFE WA colleges themselves. The personnel who have responsibilities in regard to overseas students include the Chief Executive of WADOT, the Managing Director of TIWA and his staff, college Managing Directors and non-teaching and teaching personnel in the colleges.

The first chapter of the dissertation outlined the extent to which expenditure by overseas students, including their fees and living expenses, has contributed significantly to Australia's economy since the mid-1980s. It was noted that a very large proportion of this expenditure was made by students from Asian countries. Many of these countries were once, or still are, known as 'developing countries'. Many of them had sent students to study in Australia as part of the country's aid effort to assist in the development of nations in its neighbouring region for more than 35 years immediately following World War II. However, in the 1980s, Australia's view of providing education and training to overseas students turned from one of assisting overseas development by providing 'aid' to doing so through increased 'trade', including selling education and training services provided by Australian educational institutions to students from overseas.

It was appropriate therefore, to then consider the central role of education in development. This was the subject of Chapter Two. In particular, the contribution of technical and vocational education and training in promoting development was outlined. Although subject to some criticism and some reservations, technical and

vocational education and training nonetheless continue to be important vehicles for development in developing nations. Much of the expertise in this area is provided by international development agencies on a bilateral and multilateral basis. One donor country is Australia.

Chapter Three examined the literature that pertains to the total experience of overseas students, including, in broad terms, their out-of-classroom welfare, the curriculum they study, and the teaching methods and styles used to engage them with the curriculum. Within these broad areas, a number of studies have been undertaken that have touched on almost every aspect of the life of overseas students. Among issues to arise in the literature review is the limited number of studies that have treated overseas students as other than a homogeneous group. Thus, it was concluded that how individual cultural groups respond to the experience of studying overseas is an area that needs further research. Also, the literature shows that few attempts have been made to inquire as to how institutions have dealt with male and female overseas students. From an Australian viewpoint, the literature did reveal that a strong non-financial reason for educating and training overseas students is the expectation of policy-makers of developing strong cross-cultural knowledge within Australia and the countries from where the students come.

Most of the studies reported in the literature relate to university students, with only a few concerned with overseas students studying in TAFE. Furthermore, of those studies that have focused on TAFE, relatively few have given 'voice' to TAFE personnel. The study reported here is an attempt to address this deficit.

In Chapter Four the reason for choosing the interpretivist paradigm to underpin the research was outlined. The value of an interpretivist approach to research is that it can uncover people's understandings of a phenomenon. In this approach, a basic assumption is that the important reality is what people perceive it to be. Grounded theory methods, which are consistent with the interpretivist approach, were used to gather and analyse the data.

In addressing the first research question, the study relied for its data principally on analysis of both archival and current files and documents pertaining to the provision of technical and vocational education and training in TAFE colleges in Western Australia. A small number of interviews were held with retired officers of TAFE WA who were able to throw some light on the historical documents. Information gathered in interviews with a broad but carefully selected cross-section of TAFE WA personnel currently engaged in providing for overseas students provided the rich data required to respond to the second and third research questions.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven contain the propositions that arise from the investigation into the first, second and third research questions respectively. Chapter Five, which aimed to develop an understanding of the background to overseas students in TAFE WA, is not only a useful and interesting 'story', but also enables the reader to analyse what has happened previously in order to learn as much as possible from the past, distil certain lessons for the future and offer suggestions for improving future practice in this important area of education. Chapter Six set out to develop an understanding of the present functions of TAFE

WA in providing for overseas students in its colleges. The objective in Chapter Seven was to develop an understanding of the concerns of TAFE WA personnel who have had responsibilities relating to the provision of technical and vocational education and training for overseas students. The understandings that were developed in respect of these aims were expressed as sets of propositions.

### **Propositions Arising from the Research**

#### **The First Research Aim**

The first aim of the study was to develop an understanding of the background to overseas students studying at TAFE colleges in Western Australia. The following propositions were drawn from the analysis carried out:

#### **Proposition One**

*Overseas students have been coming to Australia for most of this century. However, they have been coming in large numbers only since 1987. Furthermore, they have reflected the general tendency of overseas students to study at universities rather than in the TAFE sector.*

#### **Proposition Two**

*Before 1990, there were two categories of overseas students who studied in Australia, namely sponsored students and private students. The welfare needs of sponsored students were formally catered for by the government departments and international agencies that sponsored them. The welfare needs of private students were catered for largely by the students themselves, sometimes with informal assistance provided by the institution they attended and its staff.*

#### **Proposition Three**

*From the foundation of TAFE in Western Australia towards the end of the nineteenth century, to the present day, the curriculum offered within TAFE colleges has sought to respond to the requirements of Australian industry for its*

*supply of skilled workers. This curriculum was not modified or adapted to meet the special needs of overseas students who studied in TAFE WA. Consequently, the relevance of the curriculum to meet the requirements of overseas students for their home settings is questionable.*

#### **Proposition Four**

*Classroom strategies used in TAFE WA to teach overseas students changed little over the century until the 1990s. Over the last several years, new methods of teaching, learning and assessment have been introduced that have meant considerable adjustments by TAFE WA teachers and academic administrators. However, all teaching and learning exemplars used in TAFE WA have been grounded in Western models, and have made almost no concession to accommodate the special needs and varying backgrounds of overseas students in general.*

#### **The Second Research Aim**

The second aim of the study was to develop an understanding of the functions of TAFE WA in providing for overseas students who come to study at its colleges.

The following propositions were drawn from the analysis carried out:

#### **Proposition One**

*Since 1987, new functions began to slowly emerge in individual TAFE WA institutions in order to provide for the increasing numbers of overseas students. TIWA was able to offer only partial leadership in the early stages of administering the functions required to provide for these students. Now, however, a range of core functions in the areas of management, welfare, curriculum and teaching in regard to providing for overseas students in TAFE WA can be identified.*

#### **Proposition Two**

*Since 1994 in particular, an increasing number of diverse, formal and informal functions have been added to the core functions that had emerged in the earlier days of overseas students studying in TAFE WA. These functions emerged out of a need to respond to a sharp rise in the total number of overseas students in TAFE WA. They now form a significant part of the overall roles and tasks that make up the way each college operates.*

### **Proposition Three**

*At the end of the 1990s, all of the functions performed by TAFE WA personnel in providing for overseas students constituted just one element of the full scope of functions needed to deliver the abundant range of courses and activities available throughout TAFE WA. All functions, traditional and modern, have not been managed over the years in a cohesive manner, using the best combination of resources available. Furthermore, there has not been an overall management plan to serve as a blueprint from which a series of organisational sub-plans could be compiled in order to integrate and co-ordinate the entire sweep of functions required for the effective and efficient operation of contemporary TAFE WA.*

### **The Third Research Aim**

The third aim of the study was to develop an understanding of the concerns of TAFE WA personnel who have had responsibilities relating to the provision of technical and vocational education and training for overseas students. The following propositions were drawn from the analysis carried out:

#### **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.*

#### **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.*

### **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 affected by teaching concerns.*

### **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.*

## **Implications of the Propositions**

TAFE WA appears to have made a choice to pursue policies in favour of continuing to accept overseas students. If, as appears likely, growing numbers of overseas students will continue to be educated and trained using the resources of TAFE WA, many TAFE WA personnel will have responsibilities for providing for them. As these personnel engage with overseas students, it will be instructive for them to know more about the experience of TAFE WA in its involvement with overseas students and what might be important considerations as they go about their work. It is useful, therefore, to briefly consider what implications can be drawn from the propositions that arise from the study. These implications will be considered in regard to six specific areas of TAFE WA's operations that affect the overseas students programs, namely, policy development, student welfare, curriculum development, teaching, professional development of personnel, and

administration. In considering each of these areas, recommendations for further research will also be outlined.

### *Implications for Policy Development*

The present study can serve to increase the ‘understanding’ of policy-makers about the present functions of the TAFE WA network of institutions in dealing with overseas students and the concerns of TAFE WA personnel who give life to the functions. As a consequence of this increased ‘understanding’, it is conceivable that further policy development in the field of overseas students will also be influenced by the propositions that arise from this study.

The presence of large numbers of overseas students represents a significant innovation in educational policy, and has preceded rather than followed substantial research in the area. Policy-makers should be willing to subject policy to testing. This would require that policy-makers examine propositions that arise from research to increase their understanding of the impact of this major policy innovation, especially on those who are directly affected by the change. An examination of the propositions that arise from this study might be of some use in alerting policy-makers to the impact that overseas students are having on TAFE WA institutions and their personnel in the particular circumstances examined.

The propositions arising from the study also clearly indicate that in TAFE WA, policy objectives in regard to overseas students need to be clarified. In the absence of information to the contrary, and as evidenced by its continued support of TAFE International WA (TIWA), it is reasonable to assume that the Western Australian

Department of Training (WADOT) will continue to actively recruit overseas students to come to study in TAFE WA colleges. However, it is quite clear from the research that there is divided opinion among college managing directors about the value of such a policy. One school of thought is that accepting overseas students can be justified only if the activity is financially self-supporting. Holders of this view maintain that, in the absence of financial profitability, any other intrinsic benefits overseas students might bring are not worth while. For those with these beliefs, 'internationalising' TAFE WA as an end in itself is not a major policy objective.

An alternative view is that TAFE WA needs to 'internationalise' its outlook and its 'way of doing business' in order to enable all of its graduates, including overseas students, to contribute the knowledge and skills they possess in an international, not just domestic, environment. Furthermore, as confident, entrepreneurial organisations themselves, certain TAFE WA managing directors want to offer their college's services in the international environment. For these people, a strong policy platform that fosters 'internationalisation' of TAFE WA would be most fitting, and they see the overseas students' program as a major part of this policy development.

Recommendations for further research in this area should focus on the following:

1. Basing improvement of the major policies and processes affecting overseas students in TAFE WA on the outcomes of a systematic, planned research program extending over several years. 'Getting by' is no longer enough.

2. Preparing revised policies that contain guidelines for curriculum developers to ensure that new curricula are justified in terms of their international orientation.
3. Searching for new ways of using the expertise gathered so far in TAFE WA to look for fresh opportunities to deliver education and training for overseas students. These might include policies aimed at forming new alliances and partnerships with institutions in overseas nations to provide suitable programs there.

#### *Implications for Student Welfare*

The propositions arising from the present study have implications for practice in relation to how TAFE WA provides for the welfare of overseas students. The study found that among TAFE WA personnel, teachers and overseas student co-ordinators in particular believe that improved welfare practices need to be undertaken before overseas students arrive in Australia. These personnel urged the need for enhanced organisational arrangements to be instituted within TAFE WA to ensure greater accuracy and completeness of the information provided to overseas students before they left their home countries.

The study also revealed that teachers and overseas co-ordinators especially are concerned to see that potential cultural and linguistic difficulties of overseas students are appropriately taken into account and catered for by all personnel in TAFE WA institutions. They advocate that TAFE WA should ensure that each institution implements policies that expressly recognise the continuing responsibility that it has for the whole educational experience of overseas students.

It was evident from the study that TAFE WA personnel at all levels hoped for more interaction between overseas students and local students. Future planning for overseas students in TAFE WA should incorporate greater efforts to encourage overseas students to meet new people and make friends. In this regard, new overseas students should be strongly requested to arrive in Western Australia at least one week before the commencement of classes to attend an extended, comprehensive orientation session involving local students, later-year overseas students and representatives of off-campus community and cultural groups. Local students could also be helped to get to know and understand more overseas students through different ways of structuring the curriculum, and the teaching and learning strategies used in the classroom.

Recommendations for further research in this area should focus on the following:

1. Determining the type of information that overseas students indicate they really want in making their decision about what to study and where to do so.
2. Planning and implementing promotional materials for particular cultural groups derived at least in part from the information gathered by research as recommended in point 1 above.
3. Preparing comprehensive pre-departure seminars containing information about matters of real interest to students in cases where the number of pre-departing students from a particular country is large enough.
4. Determining the full extent of TAFE WA's on-going responsibility for safeguarding the interests of overseas students in their education and welfare.
5. Establishing standards and procedures in a wide variety of areas, including accounting for and servicing cultural and linguistic difficulties experienced by

overseas students, to ensure that they have every chance of success and are capable of benefiting from the course chosen.

### *Implications for Curriculum Development*

The propositions arising from the present study have implications for practice in relation to how TAFE WA manages the development of the curriculum studied by overseas students. In this regard, certain teachers have tried to incorporate some 'overseas content' into the curriculum. However, these have been isolated, spasmodic, individual efforts accomplished in interested teachers' own time, and have almost always been based on their personal experience of overseas environments. Unfortunately, they have also often lacked a solid underpinning of knowledge based on research. In regard to course content, questions of appropriateness, relevance, transportability to the home country work environment, or articulation to other education situations impact on the value of overseas students' educational experience in TAFE WA.

In future, a planned, progressive modification of the curriculum to include more overseas, and particularly more 'Asian' content, would be useful to provide overseas students with the opportunity to relate their Australian studies to their home environment. Furthermore, formal and certain articulation and accreditation arrangements between TAFE WA and the university sector, both in Australia and overseas students' home countries, must be established. Further, knowledge of these arrangements must be made available to overseas students.

Recommendations for further research in this area should focus on the following:

1. Acquiring knowledge about curriculum models in various overseas countries to inform TAFE WA personnel of this aspect of the background to overseas students.
2. Identifying the curriculum models best suited to not just the broad body of overseas students, but to particular cultural groups and, still further, to individual students.
3. Developing courses and units with an international flavour, to be offered, where appropriate, to overseas students.
4. Identifying qualified, competent, interested TAFE WA personnel who are best able to develop culturally-appropriate curricula, and provision of the practical means to encourage and enable them to do this work.

### *Implications for Teaching*

The propositions arising from the present study have implications for practice in relation to how TAFE WA manages the teaching effort in regard to overseas students. The range of learning objectives that overseas students feel comfortable with can be more restricted than those of local students. There needs to be recognition that overseas students may require a different delivery of core services from those offered to local students. TAFE WA teachers are interested to learn more about the extent to which mismatched teaching and learning styles derived from different cultural and intellectual traditions create problems for their overseas students. Also, teachers are keen to understand how they can better use the different backgrounds, skills and experience of overseas students in their classrooms as part of their teaching strategies. Furthermore, they would like to

know more about how to increasingly engage both overseas and local students in their teaching practices.

It is essential that there be a refinement of overseas recruitment and marketing efforts that directly affect the teaching situation. Policies and procedures must ensure that the selection criteria for overseas students are designed to maximise their academic success. As a first step, procedures in place for TAFE WA to ensure that all students accepted meet or exceed clearly enunciated academic standards for entry to their courses of choice and therefore have a reasonable chance of success, need to be strengthened. This extends to those policies and procedures in place to ensure that clear guidelines for English and other language requirements that apply to any or all courses offered are clearly defined and communicated to prospective students.

Increased provision of 'customised' or individual teaching programs should be developed. This 'provision' will become increasingly bound up with 'flexible delivery' of the curriculum, including heavy use of electronic information technology. The choice of technologies needs to be based on what is the most appropriate in the particular learning context to provide the best possible learning experience for a particular group of overseas students engaged in learning particular content.

The tight structure and dedicated purpose of the national curriculum used in TAFE WA at the end of the 1990s means that most teachers teach what is required or, if not, teach to their personal inclinations. At present there are few extrinsic

incentives for teachers to perform in a superior manner in regard to all students, particularly overseas students. The development of positive motivation in this area is critical.

Teaching overseas students at TAFE WA institutions in Western Australia helps prepare personnel in institutions for the shifts in study and organisational behaviour they may encounter when they have to go abroad to do their work under commercial contracts negotiated between their colleges and international clients.

Recommendations for further research in this area should focus on the following:

1. Acquiring knowledge about teaching styles and modes operating in various overseas countries or regions, to inform TAFE WA personnel of this aspect of the background to overseas students.
2. Developing new 'technologies' of teaching overseas students that increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the teaching and learning processes. These will involve the application of modern information technologies and may incorporate consideration of teaching part of the curriculum in the students' home countries.
3. Providing adequate rewards to teachers who spend additional time, effort and in some cases money to prepare themselves to teach overseas students.

#### *Implications for Professional Development of TAFE WA Personnel*

The propositions arising from the present study have implications for practice in relation to how TAFE WA manages the professional development of the personnel who provide for overseas students. These implications involve the appointment of

personnel who will have responsibilities for overseas students, and those who already hold such responsibilities.

In TAFE WA at the end of the 1990s, some people have become ‘experts’ in the provision of technical and vocational education and training for overseas students. They have done so through on-the-job exposure since 1987 when students first started to come in larger numbers. This was the only means by which personnel in institutions had a connection with such a student group. There was almost a total absence of training or schooling and no professional development in regard to overseas students. What was acquired as corporate experience within TAFE WA was an accumulation of ‘surface’ knowledge only. This is no longer acceptable in terms of contemporary thinking or educational professionalism. People need to be properly qualified to meet the challenges of their job in regard to overseas students in TAFE WA.

Cross-cultural understanding at the systemic level and in individual institutions is of the highest importance to success in dealing with overseas students. There is a need to develop a program of cross-cultural training that contains clarity of understanding of what is required of those personnel with responsibilities for overseas students. Such a program should encompass not just practical points for day-to-day work but also an understanding of common categories of culture, history and tradition from which overseas students come. It should be undertaken initially by those personnel, including teachers, who currently have responsibilities in providing for overseas students. All other personnel also need to complete such

a program. This would then provide a framework around which an understanding of particular groups of overseas students can be based.

In order to emphasise the centralised commitment of TAFE WA to the overseas student program, induction of all personnel in TAFE WA institutions should contain some cross-cultural training, irrespective of whether the appointment of the staff member involves work with overseas students or not. Some issues that could be emphasised in such an induction program include the strategic importance of the overseas student program to TAFE WA, especially in relation to other initiatives occurring at the same time and to come, and that overseas student 'literacy' is an asset in employment in TAFE WA.

It will be beneficial to include cross-cultural qualifications among selection criteria for those teachers who will be recruited by TAFE WA in the future, whether they are initially to teach overseas students or not. As well as formal institutional qualifications, these could include 'qualifications of experience', meaning that prospective applicants might have spent time already teaching or working in an international environment. It is time for pre-service and in-service 'teacher-training' courses to deliver course content, identify problems and produce solutions that address issues involved with teaching and learning in regard to overseas students.

Recommendations for further research in this area should focus on the following:

1. A proper thinking out of the desired culture of TAFE WA in regard to overseas students.

2. Conceptualising and defining the professional roles of those who work with overseas students. It is arguable that this need is most acute in the case of TAFE WA teachers. In turn, this requires identification of the requirements of the goals and strategies of TAFE WA in having an overseas student program.
3. Instituting planned professional development for teachers, linking the teaching performance of teachers of overseas students with appointment, accreditation and re-accreditation, as well as salary and promotion.

### *Implications for Administration*

The propositions arising from the present study have implications for practice in relation to how TAFE WA administers the overseas student program. The intake of overseas students has supplemented resources in TAFE WA institutions, helping them to maintain their operations at a time of depleted funding from government. However, overseas students are more than an economic strategy. They also have the potential to enrich the educational experience for all concerned in the enterprises of TAFE WA. The full range of benefits to be gained from having overseas students will be enhanced by eliminating the structural and other constraints that directly or indirectly cause problems for them. Resolving structural matters is a central aim of effective administration procedures.

The essence of any organisation's long-term survival and success is its ability to develop and implement a coherent corporate strategy containing both strategic plans and operational processes. TAFE WA faces the task of maintaining and improving, among other things, teaching overseas students in an environment of rapid and profound change, both in Australia and more particularly in the countries

of origin of the students. Such a task calls for effective strategic management. From this, targets can be established and accountability measures implemented. Competent administration of TAFE WA's program of educating and training overseas students will require its integration into each institution's mission statement and strategic plan. However, the present study reveals that this strategic goal is not reflected in most of the strategic planning frameworks drawn up by individual institutions. It is essential that this happens so that the constituency of each institution is knowledgeable and informed about the significance of the program in the mix of activities that take place in the institution.

The business principles of marketing and management are being increasingly applied to the operations of TAFE WA. Those responsible for marketing are urged to consider that they may be well advised to segment their potential market, particularly if they have limited resources and operate in a competitive environment. Proponents of this market segmentation approach further argue that it is more appropriate for organisations to seek to serve some of the market well all of the time rather than all of the market well some of the time. To this end, it is necessary for TAFE WA to consider some form of specialisation among colleges so that certain colleges focus on improving its expertise to provide for overseas students in a select or selected study areas. A further benefit would be that a reduced amount of resources need only be expended in each college to improve the capabilities of fewer personnel in pursuit of excellence in providing for overseas students.

One theory of business emphasises the need to be client-centred. A clear understanding of customer requirements should be an integral part of this strategy if satisfactory customer satisfaction is one of the corporate goals. To accomplish this, potential customers should not necessarily be viewed as a homogenous group.

To increase TAFE WA personnel's understanding of the variety of the cultural groups among overseas students in TAFE WA, critical and systematic analysis of past, current and prospective student markets must become part of the planning process. To date the research on student groups has been limited and fragmented, with little evidence that it has been a major influence in forward planning. TAFE WA certainly cannot afford to continue to base decisions about the needs of overseas students on stereotypes, generalisations and past practices. Furthermore, TAFE WA must follow policies and procedures to ensure that the academic programs, support services and the overall learning environment offered to overseas students will encourage them to have a positive attitude towards undertaking education and training in TAFE WA.

Further to this, it is absolutely essential that TAFE WA administrators understand, appreciate the significance of, and act on, the fact that the organisation they manage has internal 'clients' in addition to external 'customers' of students, commercial partners, industry and government. In addition to these, TAFE WA has a skilled, experienced, imaginative, dedicated, motivated and adaptable group of internal 'clients' to whom greater attention should be paid when administrators look for support in governing the organisation. This group comprises the personnel who work in the organisation. The concept of 'internal clients' is a

contemporary one prominent in the literature on the governance of organisations. It holds that the concept of efficient, effective services provided to individuals who require them is true for those in organisations who depend on their co-workers for the means to do their jobs in the best way possible. The present research reveals that this is the practical application of this concept that has been far too little used in TAFE WA institutions.

Recommendations for further research in this area should concentrate on the following:

1. Refocusing TAFE WA's organisational culture to an international outlook.
2. Establishing TAFE WA's educational philosophy for the future.
3. Developing a shared vision among TAFE WA personnel of the sector's educational future, including clarification of how TAFE WA colleges and their personnel can act individually and compete to provide a superior educational experience for overseas students, but also remain part of a network governed from the centre.
4. Forming a departmental culture that ensures that TAFE WA personnel are well enough acquainted with overseas students to operate in a manner acceptable to those students.
5. Implementing mechanisms for improving and expanding personal and academic support for personnel with responsibilities for providing for overseas students.
6. Devising the structures of governance in TAFE WA that can be designed and mobilised to achieve a co-ordinated approach.

7. Establishing genuine partnerships and collaborative working relationships between WADOT, TIWA and colleges in regard to providing for overseas students. This includes searching for ways to join regional colleges of TAFE WA in the overseas student program. It also includes making suggestions for integrating into the program units within institutions that have little to do with day-to-day teaching and learning activities that arguably form the main function of TAFE WA.

### **Conclusion**

TAFE WA seeks to be excellent in its dealings with overseas students who now form part of the mainstream of Australian education. Through its marketing and recruitment strategies, TAFE WA encourages increasing numbers of overseas students, most of them from Asian countries, to attend its colleges, and also provides technical and vocational education and training to them in overseas locations. Indeed, promoting such opportunities is one of the six “Priority Roles to 2005” listed in *TAFEPLAN 2005* (Western Australian Department of Training, 1999: 4). It is hoped that the study reported in this dissertation will further help TAFE WA to build on the success it has achieved with overseas students in the relatively short period since 1987 by adding both a historical and contemporary perspective of the phenomenon. In turn, it is considered that this will enable policy developers and strategic planners to become more informed and knowledgeable about the organisation’s experience with overseas students.

Further to this, it is also hoped that the study might also encourage those responsible for the governance of TAFE WA to strive to make its network of institutions and those who work in them, more 'overseas student literate'. Such a quality may be considered to incorporate acquisition of a cultural framework within which to relate to and understand overseas students, with points of reference to address what is unfamiliar and cope with it. This, in turn, means being able to communicate with overseas students without insecurity or condescension and with some understanding of their attitudes and sensitivities. Overall, the hope is that such a framework will enable TAFE WA personnel to enjoy their engagement with overseas students and enrich themselves from the experience. In aiming for this outcome, TAFE WA should investigate how it could be assisted to achieve its objectives in regard to overseas students by the skills that overseas students themselves have, including any 'Australia literacy' capacity that they have acquired. There should be every opportunity for them and TAFE WA personnel to make the best use of these skills, both in and out of the classroom.

The propositions arising from the study reported here provide insight into the background to overseas students studying in TAFE WA, the present functions of TAFE WA in providing for these students and the concerns of TAFE WA personnel who have had responsibilities for providing for them. As such it is a contribution to the literature on the experience of one aspect of Australia's involvement with overseas students. It was established in the opening chapter of the work that the study would not include the voices of overseas students themselves, or indeed, the views of non-overseas students studying in the same classrooms as overseas students. It was also established that it would not deal with

TAFE WA's activities in regard to separate cultural groups of overseas students. Further research focusing on these areas is urgently required. Nevertheless, the study did address substantially the intensive experience of both past and present TAFE WA personnel who have been part of the overseas students 'story' in the sector, a story that began at the turn of the last century. As a new century commences, this story is set to continue.