The International Experiences in the Education Sector

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International students

In 2006 there were 250,794 students enrolled in Australian universities and other higher education institutions. This was 25.5 per cent of all students.

International student numbers have grown by almost 100,000 in the last seven years (DEEWR, 2008).

Studies on International Students

- Language-related issues (Robertson, et al., 2000, Feast, 2002; Carroll, 2005; Pantelides, 1999; Grayson & Stowe, 2005; Sawir, 2005)
- Learning Style (Kember, 2000; Wong, 2004)
- ◆ International students' experience of transition into higher education (Prescott & Hellsten, 2005; Hellsten & Prescott, 2004; Daroesman, et. Al., 2005; Singh, 2005)
- ◆ The health and well-being of international students (Rosenthal, Russell & Thomson, 2006).
- ◆ The social and academic security of international students (Deumert, at al., 2005; Sawir, et al., 2008; Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008)

University staff understanding of international students and intercultural learning and learning

- ◆ Interview with 80 academic staff from four faculties
- ◆ Faculties of Arts, Science, Engineering and Economic and Business
- ◆ A range of ages, promotion level, approximate gender balance

Not aware of the presence of international students in their classroom

The only thing I would say is that there are some international students in the classes, and I'm not always aware of them. I mean, sometimes I look at someone and I think that must be an international student and then they talk and they sound as Australian as I do. (S 5)

You're assuming that I know that the students that I am teaching are international students and I don't necessarily. I mean sometimes it becomes apparent because of what they say but I am never notified, I never have been notified that I have, that the particular student is an international student I'm not aware of who they are formally, I can make no formal provision for them. (S 65)

I am not trained to teach international students

That's for a number of reasons. First of all, I wasn't taught in an environment where international students were present. So it's never been an issue. I wasn't specifically trained to address this. I'm just saying this in a neutral way, I don't mean any comment on that (S 5)

No change because of the nature of the subject taught

It probably hasn't, really. I mean, because, you know, chemistry is a really technical subject so, you know, the principals of chemistry haven't changed (S 13)

Okay, to be honest I don't think there's any change I implement because I think Engineering is quite universal, it's pretty much the same everywhere so I couldn't say I change anything at all. But, of course, okay, the increasing number of international students, and actually some of them, and actually I should say that most of them are from Asia, and a lot of them are from China, and it's a fact that, well, they don't speak English as another tongue in their own countries, or sometimes I have to slow down to make my point of view. (S 23)

The number of international students is very small in a particular subject

So in the program overall, in the Public Policy program, as I said we've got about 10% of our students, and I don't think that's changed very much over the last 5 years. It is quite difficult because we're the small proportion, like only 10% so in a class you might only have 1 or 2 or 3 international students with everybody else being local public servants, yeah, so, I haven't really got any good strategies for dealing with that, but maybe you can tell me some (S 44)

I myself come from non-English background

Look, for the first I'm also international, yeah, so English is my second language. So I'm encountering the same problems as some of the students, so that's not the native language. And sometimes I have questions that I don't know how to pronounce a word I ask the students and they tell me, or something like this. So that is why that way I'm trying to take out a bit of fear about not having this language, buy making a joke out of myself that I can't pronounce things properly, or so (S 77).

Having overseas experience create empathy for international students

Being in France was very good because all my students were non-mother tongue, you know, they were all learning English as a second language. So I learned a lot from that because I realized, and also myself operating in a completely different language to my mother tongue I realized how international students must feel. I had a new empathy. I mean, I thought I had some empathy before, but I had a new empathy. (S 16)

I think of what it was like when I worked in another country and it hasn't been my first language, Spanish, then I feel pressured you know if I've got to do a presentation, and when you're writing something you feel a bit pressured, right, so I'm sympathetic with that. (S 21)

I have begun to see the wisdom in doing certain things

Over the years I have begun to see the wisdom in doing certain things that I think probably help international students, although it's not specifically targeted at them' (S 5)

I think my teaching's changed anyway, simply because I've been doing it for longer and I probably am now more confident in what I do than when I first started many, many years ago (S 56)

Having a natural interest in people of other cultures

I feel like I have a natural interest in people of other cultures, and so therefore I feel like I'm sort of in a naturally, you know, open to various cultural differences. One of the subjects I teach is actually Global Marketing and International Marketing at a postgraduate level which, you know, a significant portion of that is about differences in different countries (S 11)

Teaching has evolved to allow for a lot of diversity

I think the general way of teaching has evolved to allow for a lot of diversity, not just cultural diversity so I think things that I have done are to kind of engage any level of diversity. So active learning type programs, teamed based learning, problem based learning, self-paced learning systems are things that I've used to recognize that each student has a different, or might have different requirements for learning. (S 8)

The nature of the subject taught includes cross-cultural

issues

I don't know whether you're aware of this but Media & Communication, the program was set by the faculty about 6 years ago, I think, to deliberately target the international market (S 36).

And when you teach International Management or any subject related to International Management, like Multinational Management, you spend a lot of your time focusing on the differences, the different business systems, the different cultures and so on. I suppose in very simple terms I have not done anything specific to deal with the teaching of many different students, but the very nature of the subject that I teach covers these sort of issues (S 76).

Selection of teaching materials: include international perspective

So, for example, in a subject in which I'm teaching about the significance of the motorcar in contemporary culture, the automobiles, if I use the example of a Holden car as having particular historical values for students with a cultural background in Australia. That's not going to make much sense to someone who's only been here for 12 months. So it's really been having to think about the ways in which the examples that I use are and are not shared by the cohort of students that I'm teaching (S 15)

I try to show not just white faces on the videos all the time, or American faces. So, you know, well we'll just so say something even if it's just about fashion and gender or something I'll try not to just use American examples or Australian, I try to use something about say Indonesia, or Cook Islands where I studied or something (S 49).

Readings assigned to students include international perspectives

We do that quite actively in our teaching practice. We try to incorporate examples from the region. So I do that quite a lot in terms of, that's in terms of the curriculum and the examples we use in lectures and the readings too that we assign (S 31).

Delivery of the course

- explain what to expect,
- try to speak clearly and use simple language,
- prepare an open-ended assignment,
- prepare a very good lecture notes,
- use technologies,
- promote team-based learning,
- get feedback from the students,
- try to work fairly closely with students,
- go over the materials a number of time, and
- create a non-threatening environment

Host culture also needs preparation for a diverse world

Without neglecting the efforts that an international student has to make to adjust to a new culture, we have to bear in mind that also the members of the host culture need preparation for a diverse world, especially when many of them cannot enjoy the first-hand experience of cultural differences abroad (Otten, 2003: 22)