


# The Pastoral Care of International Students in New Zealand: Looks better than Australia-but is it really Working?

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# Summary of paper

- ◆ Background of the study
- ◆ The pastoral care of international students
- ◆ The paper
- ◆ Findings concerning international students' perceptions of the Code



## Background of the study

- ◆ Part of the large study of the social and economic security of international students in Australia and New Zealand
- ◆ In Australia 200 interviews with international students
- ◆ In New Zealand 70 semi-structured interviews with international students
- ◆ The interview questions replicated those used in the parallel Australian study



## Interview questions (Australia and New Zealand)

- ◆ students' experiences with housing and health services, language problems, support structure, communities;
- ◆ the extent to which student maintain contact with with their families back home;
- ◆ financial issues and labor market experience; experiences in dealing with government;
- ◆ students' experience with universities in relation to matters of education and students administration





# The New Zealand study

The New Zealand study includes additional questions concerning:

students' awareness of the Code: and Appeal Authority and the operation of the systems



# The pastoral care of international students

- ◆ Australian approach - The National Code of Practice for Registration Authority and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students (The National Code)
- ◆ New Zealand approach - The Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (The Code)

# The Code (New Zealand)

## ◆ Parts of the Code:

- (1) Marketing, recruitment & enrolment;
- (2) contracted agents;
- (3) contract and indemnity;
- (4) welfare;
- (5) accommodation;
- (6) grievance procedures;
- (7) applications and monitoring;
- (8) administration



# International Education Appeal Authority (IEAA)

- ◆ The purpose of IEAA is to receive and adjudicate complaints received from international students and their authorised agents concerning breaches of the Code





# The paper

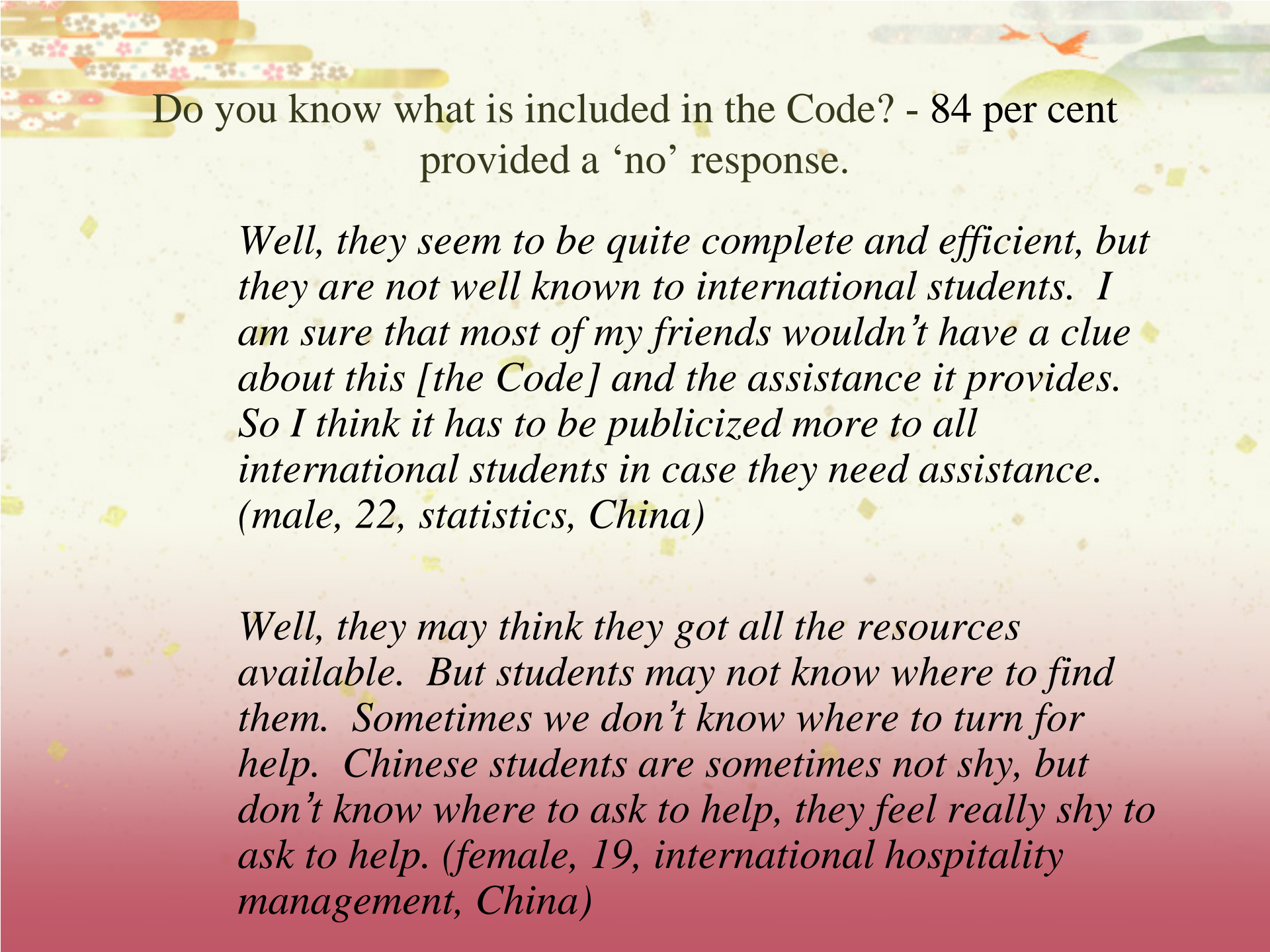
- ◆ The paper specifically examines the effectiveness of the Code and Appeal Authority from the perspective of international students
- ◆ Interviews with 70 international students enrolled at two universities in New Zealand. Results not disaggregated by institution but other categories used

## Findings

Did you know that in New Zealand there are rules and guidelines for universities that say how the universities should look after international students?

The majority of students (63%) provided a 'no' response.

*Yes I know about the Code because this is part of my job. If I am not working there I may not know this' (female, 23, marketing, Hong Kong)*



Do you know what is included in the Code? - 84 per cent provided a 'no' response.

*Well, they seem to be quite complete and efficient, but they are not well known to international students. I am sure that most of my friends wouldn't have a clue about this [the Code] and the assistance it provides. So I think it has to be publicized more to all international students in case they need assistance.  
(male, 22, statistics, China)*

*Well, they may think they got all the resources available. But students may not know where to find them. Sometimes we don't know where to turn for help. Chinese students are sometimes not shy, but don't know where to ask to help, they feel really shy to ask to help. (female, 19, international hospitality management, China)*

# Difficulties with English

*Well, I am not very sure about this. Other people might need more assistance than I do. Because usually, all this information and booklets are giving one shot to us. It always in small lettering and very complicated and very confusing especially to international students who are not very proficient in their English language. So they might not understand, or they might not really know what are their rights, or where they can seek help even though all these are provided (female, 28, geography, Singapore)*





# Student awareness of the Appeal Authority

- ◆ Nearly all students, 90 per cent of those interviewed, said that they did not know that there was a facility such as an Appeal Authority.
  - ◆ *No, but I think my agent would know about that. (female, 23, community studies, Russia).*
  - ◆ *I think it would be good if each international student had a copy of this. At least we would know what they are. (female, 21, food science, Malaysia)*



## Meeting the need of international students

- ◆ Is the system for looking after international students in New Zealand – the Code of Practice, and the International Education Appeals Authority – fully adequate to meet the needs of international students?

Over half of the students, 56 per cent, felt that the Code of Practice and the International Education Appeals Authority, once these had been detailed in the interview, were fully adequate to meet the typical needs of international students.



Others (29 per cent) were unhappy with the system.

*The Code basically gives the University an advisory role. What I mean is that if we are facing a problem, let's say financially, the University can't do anything about it. It just gives us advice, and the advice in itself doesn't help. (male, 20, medicine, India).*

A small number of students (16 per cent) were not sure how they felt about the system.

*It's pretty hard to talk about it if you don't really know about them [the Code and Authority], you can't really say. (male, 23, health, Zimbabwe).*

# Areas should be covered by the Code

## ◆ Financial assistance

- ◆ *I think there is a misconception that most or all international students who come all the way from home to study are not struggling with finances. That's a major issue for some. Probably it's [the misconception] because most international students here are not from a country like mine where there is an unfavourable exchange rate. Probably the government doesn't realize that students like us need something more [in the way of financial] security, maybe somewhere we can go to if we really need something. (female, 20, accounting, India)*



## Scholarship support

*For the international students they have not too many scholarships. Yes, this is the problem. I asked the [university] staff where I can apply for scholarships, and they told me: 'I am sorry, most of the scholarships are just for residents of New Zealand.*

*Yes, the residents of course have the right to get a scholarship but the international students have paid ten times the normal school fees to study in overseas country, why can't they get that kind of scholarship? The international students have many problems, they have got a lot more problems than the residents, yet they get good [academic] results... I think a scholarship is really needed. I can't find a suitable scholarship for international students. I can't apply for any of them. (female, 24, art & design, China)*



## Helping students finding a job

*I think it's important that the government can get from us and we get something from them. But there should be something to financially help students, there is absolutely nothing. We pay for everything. If nothing else maybe there should be jobs especially for international students, or something like that. (female, 20, accounting, India)*



## Better communication

*Now, when I am looking for job, when I tell employers that I am on a students visa they don't know about the six months work permit that we are allowed. We have to explain to them. That loses confidence. Normal employers wouldn't want you as an employee if you are not eligible to work legally, no matter how good you are. I find that I have had to explain quite few times to employers. I don't blame the government altogether, because it is a new bill, it was released just last year which is why not many companies in New Zealand know about it. (female, 22, business & marketing, Malaysia)*





## Emotional support

*If I feel lonely, is the university responsible for my loneliness. Do they have to do something about it to help me out? (female, 24, computer science, Germany).*

*If a student is so depressed, having emotional problems because they have just come to a new culture, because there is nobody around them... the University should provide some sort of psychologist for it, yes, a counsellor. (female, 19, law, China)*





## Better integration with local students

Commenting on the overall system of pastoral care, one student remarked that:

*Well I would say it's very adequate. They mostly focus on like harassment and abuse and things like that.. [but] there are other important things, maybe, like getting international students to know the place, New Zealand, and helping international students make more local friend. (female, 19, community studies, Fiji)*



## Personnel with good cross-cultural knowledge

*I hope that the university will provide tutorial assistance for international students, for the international students together. The tutor should be someone that can understand our problems and speak slower. (female, 23, psychology, Malaysia)*

*If you have the overseas degree, the University should provide people who can guide the University... so that if you have already studied something you don't have to do it again in New Zealand. I have got an accounting degree but they did not look at my transcript, or what examinations I had done... you end up studying the same thing you studied in your country, just in a different language. (female, 30, accounting, Thailand)*



# Monitoring

*Yes, sure and specially from what you are doing, from getting the voices from students themselves because unless you know exactly what happen to them, how can you provide adequate system to help them. There is more or less just so call late late service (female, 33, applied language studies, Taiwan)*



## Overall effectiveness of the system

A majority (61 per cent) reported that the systems worked better in dealing with problems in their University as compared with dealing with problems in the general New Zealand community, and problems associated with the New Zealand government.



## Typical students' responses

- ◆ *I think in the problems in the work place are less talked about. (female, 23, marketing, Hong Kong)*
- ◆ *No, it doesn't cover the workplace problems. (female, 26, psychology, Taiwan)*
- ◆ *I don't think so. I don't think they have any authority or influence on employers. (male, 22, statistics, China)*
- ◆ *I don't think the employers here really follow the guidelines for the pastoral care of international students. (female, 28, geography, Singapore)*
- ◆ *I think with problem in general, yes. I am not sure about in the workplace. (female, 29, early childhood education, UK)*



## Conclusion and Implications

Is the system of pastoral care working?

- ◆ Most students believe that the system is adequate but unless students understand the system they cannot exercise their rights (eg. to make an appeal).
- ◆ Information about the system gets stuck with education agents and is not passed on to new students.



# The Institutional Domain

- Better exposure of the Code
- Staff with good cross-cultural knowledge
- Financial assistance
- Provision of social support
- The need to develop closer integration between international students and local students
- Monitoring through the voice of international students



## The non-institutional domain

- ◆ Better collaboration among education providers, government as well as New Zealand community