

Key factors that influence recruiting young Chinese students

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The discussion in this paper is based on the assumption that international education is equated to recruiting and educating international students, even though its true concept goes far beyond this narrow understanding. The purpose of this research is to look at the key factors that influence recruiting young Chinese students, and make sure all who work in this field understand how their business will achieve success.

This is done through an analysis of the Chinese education system, the history of young Chinese students studying abroad, China's economic outlook, the Australian and Chinese governments' attitudes and international education policies, and the expectations of the students and their families. The article concludes with some constructive recommendations and suggestions.

Chinese students, study abroad, recruiting business, education.

INTRODUCTION

According to Australia Education International (AEI), the total full-fee paying international student enrolments in Australia during 2006 reached a total of 383,818, of which China accounted for 23.5 per cent (90,287). Meantime, the total commencements of international students reached 211,296. Table 1 presents data on enrolments from different countries and the growth in enrolments in 2006.

Table 1. Enrolments from different countries and the growth in enrolments in 2006

Nationality	Enrolments	Percentage of Total	Growth in on 2006
China	90,287	23.5%	10.5
India	39,166	10.2%	41.9
Republic of Korea	31,257	8.1%	18.8
Hong Kong	20,523	5.3%	-3.8
Malaysia	19,166	5.0%	-1.0
Thailand	17,889	4.7%	8.3
Japan	17,804	4.6%	-6.6
Indonesia	15,038	3.9%	-6.7
United States	12,045	3.1%	-4.3
Brazil	10,190	2.7%	43.9
Other	110,453	28.8%	12.3
Total - All nationalities	383,818	100.0%	10.9%

(Source: AEI Releases Annual 2006 International Students Enrolment Data, Wednesday, 21 February 2007)

The Higher Education sector is where most international students are enrolled; the market share is as high as 45 per cent. The market share of the school sector used to be 14 per cent in 1994 and is now reported to be around 6.5 per cent of the total market. However, in South Australia, according to a 2006 Parliament report (Parliament of South Australia, 2006, The Impact of

International Education Activities in South Australia, Twenty Fourth Report of the Social Development Committee), the total enrolment of international students is 17,936, of which the school sector has 1,964 contributing nearly 11 per cent. Within the school sector, China is the largest resource country which accounts for 45 per cent compared with 42 per cent of the national situation.

It is an AU\$ 7.5 billion industry according to the Federal Minister Hon. Julie Bishop MP at the International Education Forum 2006 but is re-estimated as an AU\$ 9.8 billion industry (AIEC Perth, 2006), which provides at least 15 per cent of university revenue and creates at least 51,000 jobs for the nation. Obviously all states across the country have benefited significantly from this industry. Australia's economy without international students would definitely be very different.

As an International Business Manager responsible for the China market for the South Australian Education Department I understand many schools are interested in recruiting young students from China and they have put considerable resources into the recruitment process. However, while some are successful, many have not achieved as satisfactory a result as they had expected. People would be curious to know **why**? This paper explores the reasons and helps us understand why young Chinese students choose South Australia for their overseas education.

METHODOLOGY

As a skilled marketing person, I have had very rich experiences in dealing with Chinese education agents and students on the frontline. This research has involved a questionnaire, interviews and critical incidents as well as participating in a few international education conferences to investigate the key factors that affect the international education business and to illustrate how we may be more successful in this industry.

Education Profile of China

China is a heavily populated country. Even though the Chinese Government has made great efforts to control the growth of its population, the population of China, however, in January 2005 exceeded 1.3 billion.

In China, education is divided into three categories: basic education, higher education, and adult education. Basic education in China includes pre-school education, primary education and regular secondary education. The Compulsory Education Law stipulates that each child has nine years of formal education. Secondary education in China can be divided into academic secondary education and specialized/vocational/technical secondary education. Academic secondary education is delivered in academic lower and upper middle schools.

Lower middle school graduates wishing to continue their education take a locally administered entrance examination, on the basis of which they have the option either of continuing in an academic upper middle school or of entering a vocational secondary school.

The latest figures show that in recent years the secondary school education system had developed steadily: in 2004, the total enrolment was 92.64 million¹.

The History and Reasons for Young Chinese Students Going Abroad for Study

Education is regarded as being above everything else in China. The beliefs that "education, the treasure within" and "education, the beauties within" are deeply rooted into and have become part of China's tradition and Chinese culture. For centuries China stood as a leading civilization, outpacing the rest of the world not only in the arts and sciences but also in the size of its economy. Until 1820 China accounted for about one third of the world GDP. China attracted

¹ <http://big5.china.com.cn/chinese/ch-sz2005/kj/kj.htm>, viewed on 11 June 2006

many people from overseas including westerners who came to learn its advanced technology, its culture and its history. Unfortunately in the nineteenth and early twentieth century's, because of the inability and corruption of the Qing government, the country was invaded by foreign troops. This was followed by civil unrest and major famines, China was left behind by the western countries, and it was from then on that people began to realise and think about the importance of studying abroad to learn from western countries.

The Contemporary history of overseas study

Rong Hong was believed to be the first young Chinese student to study abroad. After seven years study at Yale University in the United States, he returned to China in 1854 (Yao 2004). It was under his advocacy, and with the strong support from senior government officials that the Qing Government launched a government-sponsored pilot scheme of sending young Chinese students to study advanced technology and culture in western countries. So the first group of 120 young students, aged between 12 to 16 years, were sent to the United States between 1872 and 1875. Even though the plan was abolished due to the conservatives in the Qing Government, some of the young students who returned made significant contributions to the process of China's modernization and achieved success in their professional careers. These included the railway engineer Zhan Tianyou, and Tang Shaoyi the founder of Fudan University and the first Premier of the Republic of China who inspired the later generation of overseas students.

Given the contribution that the Western values made, and the role that the returned overseas Chinese students played in the Republic Period, and in contemporary Chinese history, studying abroad became more fashionable later despite the change of governments until the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. Wang (2005, pp5-14) classified the trend as: the first generation from 1872-1900; the second generation from 1900-1927; the third generation from 1927-1949; the fourth generation from 1949 -1965 and the fifth generation is from 1978 to today.

1978

It is obvious that there was a major 'gap' from 1965 to 1978. This was because of the Cultural Revolution in China during this period.

The year, 1978, in China's modern history is regarded as a 'watershed' date, as from then on the Chinese Government began to carry out its reform through the so-called 'Open-Door' policy. Chinese intellectuals welcome this reform as their 'spring'.

The man who steered the reform was Deng Xiaoping, the most influential leader after Mao Zedong, who himself also had the experience of studying abroad (in France). Deng Xiaoping ordered the State Council to work out a policy to expand academic communication with foreign countries and to support students and scholars studying abroad. Since then (1978), according to *People's Daily Overseas Edition* (27 February 2007), there have been more than one million students and scholars who have been sent (sponsored by the Government) or gone (self funded) overseas to study.

The word '*Hai Gui*' was created especially to refer to those returned overseas students. '*Hai*' means 'sea' and '*Gui*' means 'turtle' which in Chinese has the same pronunciation as 'returned'. So '*Hai Gui*' really refers to the 'returned overseas students'.

Going abroad to study has become a fashionable aspect of culture in China today.

Dream of Hai Gui

According to statistics from the Ministry of Education P.R.China, in 2001, 51 per cent of leaders of universities administered by MoE, 80 per cent of the academics, and 90 per cent of the deans in the universities have had the experience of studying abroad. By 2005, *Hai Gui* has accounted for

more than 94 per cent of all middle-and-above management leaders of the China Academy (Wang et al. 2006, p.4). In future the figure will be even higher. *Hai Gui* are not only playing their roles in the academic world, but also in government, in politics, in economics, in military and foreign affairs, in technology and in all walks of China's society.

Hai Gui have changed not only their lives and their careers but also the course of China's modernization, and China's twenty-first century and beyond. They are highly regarded by the government and the society, awarded with eye-catching salaries and prominent positions. The value of foreign qualifications and the so-called 'fame and gain' the returned overseas students have obtained aroused the strong interests of young students to follow their example.

The out of step education system

During the past few decades, China's economy has boomed, so that China has overtaken the United Kingdom since 2006, becoming the fourth largest economy in the world². Alongside this economic development, China's education has also achieved great success. However, the education system has not kept pace with the economic development. Mooney (2006) writes in Beijing:

Chinese higher education lacks creativity..., "Our universities give you knowledge, but not the ability to do critical thinking," says Hu, of the Shanghai academy.

Students complain of instructors who stand in front of the class reading from a textbook, barely bothering to look up from the pages. "The old professors prepared their notes five or ten years ago, but a lot of things have changed since then," she (Ms Tang, a recent graduate of a university) says. "They're divorced from society."

Chinese scholars say respect for authority also holds students back. "In a Confucian society the teacher tells the truth and you don't question it," says Hu. The tradition discourages open discussion in the classroom and the possibility of students' challenging their professors.

In the school sector, even though the Chinese government has increased the number of university places, competition is still very strong, that leaves curriculum reform in a 'dead' situation. According to one newspaper there were more than 9.9million high school graduates participating in the national entrance examination in 2006, but there were only 5.3 million places available, which means that about 47 per cent of the students were not able to continue with their higher education study. The competition is so fierce that high school students only sleep 5.5 hours a day according to an education official from a Municipal Education Department. So to avoid such fierce competition some students and their families may choose to study overseas.

The impact of the trend of globalisation

Students going to study abroad or student mobility is not only a feature of the Chinese system. Currently, it is estimated that over 2.7 million students study outside their home country, according to a conference held in Beijing in 2005 (*People's Daily Overseas Edition*, 18 November 2005). Projections by various institutions including IDP Australia, suggest dramatically expanding the demand for international education, doubling over the next ten years and then perhaps doubling again, with as many as seven million students studying outside their home country. The latest figure on the percentage of foreign tertiary students studying abroad reveals that:

² Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia's website, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_\(nominal\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)) viewed on 1 February 2007

- (a) out of every ten tertiary students studying abroad, four are Asians, three are Europeans and one is African;
- (b) half of all foreign students study in Europe and almost one-third are in the United States;
- (c) three countries host half of the world's foreign students (United States, United Kingdom, and Germany) adding in the next two highest hosting countries (France and Australia), these five countries serve two-thirds of the world foreign students;
- (d) while 30 per cent of all foreign students are in the United States, they represent only 4 per cent of this country's tertiary students, while in the United Kingdom and in Germany, foreign students make up one in ten of the total tertiary enrolments and, in Australia almost one in seven;
- (e) eight out of ten foreign European students study in another European country;
- (f) three out of five foreign students in Europe are studying either in the United Kingdom, Germany or France.

(Source: *Tertiary Students Abroad: Learning without Borders*: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2005)

China, as a member of the global community, is inevitably part of this trend.

Commercial feature

If the social contribution and personal career development are regarded as the inner drive in this trend, the commercial features have to be seen as the outer drive.

In the United States, the number of international students enrolled in higher institutions has reached 565,000 and the economic benefit to the country is estimated at US\$13 billion. (International Institute of Education Network Website, 2006) In Australia, the total enrolment has reached 380,000 students and the economic benefit to the country is believed to have reached AU\$ 10 billion. According to the Australian Government, in 1995, 5.9 per cent of total university income was tuition fee income from international students (IDP Education Australia 1997). This has now exceeded 15 per cent.

Some commentators criticize Australian institutions for being too commercial:

In Australian institutions, international education has been shaped largely by university leader-managers—particularly entrepreneurial presidents and marketing units—rather than by faculty. To seize niche markets, some universities have developed new programs almost overnight without much regard for shared governance or faculty ownership of the curriculum. (Marginson, 2002)

In South Australia, there were 17,936 overseas students in 2005, more than triple the number in 1998 (5,584). International students make a significant contribution to the State's economy, over AU\$553 million in 2005 (Philips, 2006), which accounts for approximately 0.9 per cent of the state GSP³.

A report from China indicates that in 1991, the number of Chinese students studying overseas was 39,000, but in 2006 this figure had reached 130,000 (People's Daily Overseas. Edition 7 March 2007). Given that most young students choose an agent to help them to apply for a letter of offer from overseas education providers, and students' visas, say the average spending is about Chinese Yuan (CNY) 10,000 for the service, this service only is a CNY 1.3 billion industry. The commercial push is obviously an unarguable factor. As school students are very young, agents play a key role in recruiting and referring students to the Australian school sector.

³ SA GSP 62,798m, <http://www.treasury.act.gov.au/snapshot/GSP/pdf>, viewed on 21 November 2006

In order to attract more international students, education providers also make every effort to provide a significant amount of marketing funds, and some providers even pay as high as 25 per cent of the first year's tuition fee as commission or incentive for their agents.

The Governments' Policies

Australia

As a report prepared by Sydney University points out,

Australia's participation in international education was facilitated through the Colombo Plan in 1950. The aim of the Plan was to assist Asian Pacific nations to raise their standard of living. Over the following two decades many students from Asia came to study in Australia. In 1969, Australian universities established the International Development Program of Australian Universities and Colleges (IDP). The original IDP charter was to implement the Australian aid program in higher education. However, since the 1960s the role of IDP has expanded under its new role of IDP Australia, acting now as a broker between Australian education institutions, foreign governments, and companies and funding agencies. [It is not surprising, as] the economic and social impact of globalisation has tended to supplant many of the earlier efforts of international co-operation. (An International University, Sydney University, 2003, Report of the Committee to Review Internationalisation)

I do not believe the original aims of international education still remain. I strongly agree with Skilbeck (2006) that "a dominant motif over the past two decades in Australia among several other countries has been international education as a tradeable commodity."

The Australian Government, for more than the past decade has seen international education as a new export industry, supporting the aggressive overseas recruitment activity by educational institutions. The May 2003 Budget included a comprehensive package of Commonwealth initiatives worth more than AU\$113 million over four years to support and expand Australia's international education industry (The Hon. Dr Brendan Nelson MP 2003). Moreover, in the same year a Memorandum of Understanding on promoting Australia Education Internationally was signed between Department of Education Science and Technology, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Austrade, Department of Immigration Multicultural Affairs, Department of Industry Tourism and Resources, Australian Tourism Commission, and AusAID to strengthen the Australian engagement in international education and training and building up Australia's share in international trade, it is interesting to note that the original aims of international education are rarely mentioned in this document.

China

According to officials from the Ministry of Education, P.R.China, more than one million Chinese students and scholars since 1978 have gone overseas study, among whom 230,000 have returned to China⁴.

China's rapid social and economic developments owe a great amount to the nations' international education policy and its practice. The Chinese Central Government's policy in this regard involves supporting students and scholars studying abroad, encouraging them to return to China upon their completion of studies and guaranteeing the freedom of coming and going.

People's Daily Overseas Edition (20 August 2001) points out that "the new policy is meant to end the thinking that only those students who return to China are patriotic". "They will win the

⁴ http://www.chisa.edu.cn/chisa/article/20060606/20060606016180_1.xml , viewed on 8 June 2006

respect, encouragement and rewards by the government for their contributions to China, whether they live at home or abroad”, the policy states. According to the policy, students can serve the motherland through part-time jobs, cooperation in research, investment and founding new companies, human resources training, and acting as intermediaries without having to live on the mainland⁵.

By 2003 in China, 21 National Science Parks for returned students to start-up enterprises” were established and jointly sanctioned by Ministry of Education, Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Personnel and State Bureau of Foreign Experts Affairs and, around 8,000 enterprisess were set up with an annual revenue of CNY 30 billion (AU\$4.6 billion). The Chinese government believes that a so-called ‘harvest season’ is coming, and the policy will be continued.

The economic growth of China

Since China implemented its Open-Door policy in 1978, China's economy has maintained an average annual growth rate of 9 per cent. In 2006, China revised its GDP to more than US\$2 trillion according to the director of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), which means the country has overtaken the United Kingdom to rank fourth in world economy (it was the thirty second in 1978).

Education is regarded as the first choice investment before the house and car for many Chinese families. This belief comes from traditional Chinese culture, and the continuing rapid growth of China’s economy makes more and more people’ s so-called ‘dreams’ come true.

South Australia’s competitors and factors affecting the business

According to AEI in 2005, 93 per cent of the schools market came from 12 countries and regions, with 73 per cent coming from merely four countries and regions: China, the Republic of Korea, Hong Kong SAR and Japan. Despite an overall growth in student numbers at the school level since 1994, proportionately the school sector has dropped from 13.6 per cent in 1994 to 7.4 per cent of overall international student enrolment in 2005.

In my view, this is mainly because of the concerns of parents about young students’ safety and welfare issues.

In terms of competitors, they are not from the traditional competitors like the higher education sector is facing, as both the United Kingdom and United States’ policies are focused on the tertiary level (Skilbeck and Connell 2006, p.46). The competitors are mostly from interstate and the private sector. New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria (VIC) recorded the largest international students’ enrolment. In 2004, NSW shared 35 per cent of the whole market, VIC shared 29 per cent, Queensland shared 16 per cent and West Australia shared 9 per cent.

Other than the interstate threats, the private sector and their products are also taking their share from the government sector. In 2006 non-government schools enrolled 61 per cent of international school students. Enrolment in foundation programs together with other non-award program has also grown by 11 per cent and commencements by 13 per cent.

Apart from the above factors, some traditional student resource countries such as Japan, Singapore and Malaysia are making every endeavour to build up their images as regional centres for international education.

⁵ viewed on 17 October 2005 http://english.people.com.cn/english/200108/20/eng20010820_77688.html

Expectations of Students, their Parents and Chinese Agents

For young Chinese students, the most important factor that their families first consider is a safe environment, and this is where South Australia is believed to have an advantage. Other factors they are concerned with are considered in the following section.

School expectations: When a Chinese family is thinking about sending their child to study in Australia, normally there are two things they always ask. They are: “What is your school’s hardware like?” and “What is your school’s software like?”

People in Australia feel puzzled when they are asked these questions. What Chinese students’ parents really mean or they really want to know are about the standard of the school’s facilities and teaching quality. For Chinese people, the ‘hardware’ really refers to the school’s appearance, the facilities and location⁶. The term ‘Software’ refers to a school’s academic program and support services and caring including the Tertiary Education Ranks of its students.

It is part of the traditional Chinese culture that all parents wish their children to be successful (to be so-called ‘dragons’) in their future career. A survey that I administered in 2004 among 45 young Chinese students in South Australian government schools showed that 48 per cent of young Chinese student wished to obtain a Bachelor’s degree, 29 per cent wished to obtain a Master’s degree. A strong academic program is clearly one of the key criteria that students and parents consider.

Home-stay expectation: Due to China’s family policy, one couple normally can only have one child. A safe environment is also a key criterion for their decision.

The term of ‘safe environment’ does not just refer to the city environment; the concern is more related to the home-stay environment. In 2004, almost 75 per cent of public school international students used homestay. Generally speaking students feel satisfied about their homestay environment. But cases such as Ms Qu encountered do exist.

QU, as an international student, graduated from a South Australian government school in December in 2004, and is now studying in a university in South Australia. About two years ago, I conducted a business trip to the city where QU is from. QU’s parents came to the hotel where I was staying to see me. I invited them to have coffee in the hotel lounge. Qu’s parents told me an unpleasant story relating to their daughter’s experience.

One Saturday night QU’s homestay parents were out for dinner, she had dinner herself at home and then did some self-study at her room. Around 9.00pm she felt she wanted to drink something. She then took a cup of milk to her room. As she was concentrating on her study, she split the milk onto the carpet. QU felt very embarrassed and then found the vacuum machine, using it to vacuum the carpet.

The next day (Sunday) morning, her homestay father knocked at her door questioning her what did she do to the vacuum machine because it didn’t work. After listening to Qu’s story about the milk, the father declined Qu’s suggestion to repair the vacuum machine for the family if she damaged it. The homestay parents took QU to a vacuum shop in the afternoon asking her buy a new cleaner, same model, for the family. As they couldn’t find exactly the same model they agreed for Qu to buy a similar one.

“How much do you guess?” Qu’s father asked me? “People always say that milk is not expensive in Australia, but one cup of milk cost me AU\$ 800.00!, which is about CNY 5,000 , enough for us to buy perhaps a dairy cow in China!!”

⁶ All Asian students have shown a strong preference for schools in metropolitan centres.

Apart from some individual cases, the common homestay issues are food, household chores, language, safety issues, internet and telephone use. Placing unreasonable burdens on students, such as, excessive house duties and babysitting, is justified to students as 'the Australian way' (Parliament of South Australia 2006, p.75).

There are no clear guidelines on the homestay's responsibility and service standards, so there is an urgent need for training and counselling regarding responsibilities and expectations of both students and families. Government infrastructure investment is strongly recommended for the young student. Remember "overseas students themselves are the most powerful marketing tool in international education" (Parliament of South Australia 2006, p.47).

Cultural Sensitivity and its Effect on Business

People always say, "Business is business regardless of what cultural background one is from". Not exactly, I would say. Business is business but cultural sensitivity does make a difference.

It is very popular to talk about internationalization or globalization in these times. However, internationalization or globalization does not mean centralization, nor does it mean one culture dominating another, or being above another. If one really understands the meaning of internationalization or globalization one should allow the existence of the differences, should understand that handling the business should be based on the mutual respect and mutual understanding of different values of concept and different cultures.

Mrs H is a school principal of a South Australian Government Schools. She is very proud of the growth of her school's international student program, and is keen to get it growing even faster.

Mr G is a principal of a private school from China. I know he will bring business for us so I accompanied him to visit Mrs H's school when he visited Adelaide in 2003.

Mr G felt insulted after the visit to Mrs H's school. Because Mrs H did not provide the transport to him nor did she reimburse Mr G for the taxi expenses as she promised according to Mr G.

Mr G vented his unhappiness to me, "I don't like H's manner at all. Who does she think she is? I am also a school principal in China!" Mr G told me he would not cooperate with Mrs H and asked me to find another school for him.

For the last three years since Mr G's first visit to Adelaide, he has sent about 80 full fee paying students to South Australian Government Schools but none to Mrs H's school.

I know Mrs H did not mean to ignore him, but the fact is that she lost a very good business opportunity through a lack of understanding of Chinese culture and giving Mr G the wrong impression that he was not welcome.

Issues and Recommendations:

As it is stated in this paper, I believe that the aim of international education has been supplanted by the economic benefits. It is very dangerous for the continued growth or maintenance of programs that international education is more profit driven rather than education focussed.

As a result of the current international education policy, Australia relies too much on the revenue from international students, that is 15 per cent of the total university revenue. In South Australia according to the Parliament of South Australian, the Twenty Fourth Report, the three universities all have high proportions of international students, the University of South Australia 30.7 per cent, followed by the University Adelaide 23.0 per cent and Flinders University 19 per cent.

Following the pace of the higher education sector, with the support from state governments, the secondary sector is also keen to expand its market share. It is reported there were 1,964 overseas students in 2005, who poured more than AU\$45 million per annum into the state economy.

In the State Strategic Plan⁷ the South Australian Government has set targets for the number of full fee paying students, but has neglected the true concept of international education and the provision of service to young international students.

Tiffen, Associate Professor of Government at the University of Sydney, criticized the Howard government for reducing university funding compared to its international counterparts, which may have potentially serious effects.

Professor Mary Kalantzis (2001) also pointed out, that “Australia spends a mere 4.3 per cent of GDP on public investment in education (OECD 2001:B2.1a). This compares with an OECD average of 5 per cent, whilst the leading nations spend well over 6 per cent of GDP on their education sector. Simply, there is not enough money in the system”.

Again, as a result of the current government policy on international education, concerns about the quality of education at both tertiary (Federal) and school (State Government) level have to be raised. Based on a range of performance indicators, Flinders University is placed at number 26, the University of Adelaide at 36, and the University of South Australia at 37 among the 38 publicly funded universities in Australia⁸, even though I don't agree with assessment method and there may be different views on the evidence collected.

According to the *South Australia Chinese Weekly* (15 June 2006), South Australia is one of the worst states facing low retention rate and a perceived poor quality of school education. The ambitious plan to build up Adelaide as an ‘education city’ and ‘university city’ might be affected by this negative report.

Overseas, Australia has been criticized in recent years by the Asian media, for example, the Chinese media and some academics, for its export of education in the terms of ‘greedy’, ‘nakedness’ and ‘bleeding’. This is because of the government's policy on international education has lapsed from its true meaning. International education is regarded as a purely tradeable commodity. As a result, problems of quality of students and the quality of the international students' program are all emerging, as well as young students' welfare issues. These include:

- not being treated as local students, and their rights are not protected;
- racism, discrimination and bad treatment;
- unfair policy (overseas student visa conditions) implanted by DIMA;
- community acceptance and understanding;
- support services;
- cultural shock;
- language barrier & communication difficulties;
- feeling of being treated as a ‘cash cow’;
- friendship (according to my survey two years ago, when in need 75 per cent of the young Chinese students will speak to their friends, 4 per cent to teachers, 21 per cent to parents);
- loneliness, and
- pastoral care.

These issues are very common and are not just happening to young Chinese and other nationals, but are happening to young overseas students across all Australia, as research conducted by Monash University in a study of 202 students' cases has suggested.

⁷ http://www.saplan.org.au/plan_detail.php, viewed on 20 June 2006

⁸ <http://www.australian-universities.com/rankings>, viewed on 20 June 2006

Therefore it is strongly recommended that one urgent issue for the Governments at both the Federal and State levels is to broaden their internationalisation focus “from merely the recruitment of fee-based international students to a more broadly-based internationalisation policy” (Report prepared by Sydney University). The Governments must also increase funding on education and see it as an investment for the future of the nation. The government must make sure to build up, through every avenue, a world-class education which is worthy of its name. Otherwise, Australia today, as one of the biggest education export countries in the world however, could become an education service import country tomorrow. This is not an alarmism position.

The Governments must also show to the world that they not only welcome but provide superior services to overseas students. As part of this they need to make sure that the following changes occur.

- Australian teachers and students participate in study tours to understand the diversity of the world.
- Enough attention is given by Governments to engaging the wider public and to creating an atmosphere that international education is valued by the community.
- Set up scholarships to attract highly intelligent students to South Australia, and welcome those who would like to stay to join the local people to contribute to the development of the state and the nation.
- Set up an independent agency for dealing with grievances between international students and education providers so that young students are looked after well and their rights are protected.
- School leaders, staff and students are aware of the cultural sensitivity and its effects on their International Student Program.

CONCLUSIONS

The concept of ‘International Education’ should not be narrowed to just recruiting full fee paying students. I agree with Skilbeck that there should be a much broader understanding and Australia’s international education activities should be presented in many places and different ways.

Even if we accept ‘International Education’ as it is interpreted now, as a tradeable commodity, we still have to understand our customers and best serve their needs. Only by doing so, can we achieve success.

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