

**AUSTRALIAN
UNIVERSITIES QUALITY
AGENCY**

**Student Experiences of Offshore Higher Education:
Issues for Quality**

December 2004

David Pyvis and Anne Chapman

AUQA Occasional Publications Number 3

ISSN 1446-4268

ISBN 1 877090 31 X

© 2004 Australian Universities Quality Agency

Level 10, 123 Lonsdale Street

Melbourne, VIC 3000

Ph 03 9664 1000

Fax 03 9639 7377

admin@auqa.edu.au

www.auqa.edu.au

The Australian Universities Quality Agency receives financial support from the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments of Australia

CONTENTS

PREFACE	v
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 The Australian Higher Education Sector's Engagement with Offshore Education	2
1.2 Structure of the Paper.....	3
2 METHOD	5
3 CASE STUDY 1: SINGAPORE	7
3.1 Culture Shock and the International Student	7
3.2 The Case Study Research.....	9
3.3 Findings and Discussion	10
3.4 Conclusion	16
4 CASE STUDY 2: HONG KONG	17
4.1 Background and Context.....	17
4.2 Dilemmas in the Case of Hong Kong	18
4.2.1 Sense of Belonging.....	18
4.3 Educational Goals	19
4.4 Learning Style Preferences	20
4.5 Relationships with Supervisors.....	21
4.6 Conclusion	22
5 CASE STUDY 3: MALAYSIA	23
5.1 New Kinds of Students	23
5.2 Offshore Student Identity and Experience: a Neglected Subject	23
5.3 The Malaysian Research Project.....	24
5.4 Case Study Findings.....	25
5.4.1 Choosing a Program	25
5.4.2 Social Practices of the Educational Program.....	26
5.4.3 Managing Study.....	28
5.5 Conclusion	29
6 CROSS-CASE FINDINGS	31
6.1 Proposition 1	31
6.2 Proposition 2	34
6.3 Proposition 3	36
6.4 Conclusion	38
7 CONCLUSION	39
8 REFERENCES	41
AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS	47

PREFACE

This paper, Number 3 in the AUQA Occasional Publication series, considers an issue very topical within Australian Higher Education. The authors' research into the experiences and identity formation of international students studying with three Australian universities operating transnationally offers important insights into factors of importance in activities of this nature.

Both authors have a particular interest in the internationalisation of higher education.

David Pyvis is the co-ordinator of the Master of Media Management program in the Faculty of Media, Society and Culture at Curtin University of Technology. He also teaches research methodologies in the Faculty's Honours program. David has been involved with offshore education for the past six years. He has designed postgraduate courses for delivery in Hong Kong and Singapore, and undergraduate courses for delivery in Singapore and Malaysia. David has taught extensively in twinning programs in Hong Kong and Singapore and moderated Australian university programs delivered in Malaysia. His main research interests lie in offshore education. David is currently examining the impact of different and evolving modes of offshore delivery on student experience and identity formation. He is also very interested in the development of best practice models for offshore education and in the nature of academic work 'offshore'.

Anne Chapman is an Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Education, The University of Western Australia, where she is the Graduate Research Co-ordinator and co-ordinator of the Master of Educational Studies program. She teaches at undergraduate, masters and doctoral levels, in the fields of qualitative research methods, pedagogy, and professional development in education. She is also involved in the design and delivery of units in the School's masters and doctoral transnational programs and the supervision of higher degree students offshore. Her main research interests are in the areas of the internationalisation of higher education and the social semiotics of classroom learning. Her current research focuses on the dynamics of educational communities and identity in the context of the internationalisation of Australian universities. Contact details of both authors are provided at the conclusion of the paper.

The views expressed in this paper are entirely those of the authors, based on their research. It is AUQA's hope that this paper will contribute to the quality enhancement of transnational educational activities.

Dr David Woodhouse
Executive Director

1 INTRODUCTION

Student experience is a key indicator of the quality of educational provision. In its simplest form, quality in education is that which satisfies the student (Ellis, 1993). This paper contributes to understandings of quality in Australian higher education by presenting the findings of case study research into the experiences and identity formation of international students studying with Australian providers overseas. The view presented is that the more universities understand about what factors are needed to achieve a good and successful experience for international students studying in this manner, the more they can ensure these factors are present in offshore delivery.

There are many reasons why Australian universities need to ensure their international students studying overseas are being provided with quality education. Not the least of these is that Australian universities have involved themselves in offshore education largely to broaden their sources of revenue and to expand their international profiles (IDP, 2000). According to the Department of Education, Science and Training, Australian universities annually enrol more than 73,000 students offshore. Projections for the next decade “suggest growth in offshore higher education provision is likely to outstrip growth onshore” (DEST, 2004, p. 1). It is estimated that by 2025, there will be 436,000 students offshore, which will account for approximately 44% of total demand for Australia’s international higher education (IDP, 2002). To achieve the desired results in these areas, Australian universities need to ensure that they are consistently providing overseas students with quality education. The Australian Government also has a keen interest in the matter: “International students provide the foundation for strong foreign and trade relations, as well as research and scientific exchanges and collaboration that are vital to our continued economic growth and development” (Dr Brendon Nelson, Australian Government Minister for Education, Science and Training, 25/06/04).

Australian universities also have legal and ethical obligations to provide their overseas students with quality educational experiences. The National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Process (2000) require that Australian universities carry full responsibility for all aspects of delivery, including the quality and standards of the course, and the qualifications of teaching staff, resource levels and student support arrangements. It has been observed that this responsibility reasonably extends to the overseas operations of Australian universities (National Tertiary Education Union, 2004). An ethical obligation to provide overseas students with quality education exists because all 38 Australian universities are signatories to the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee (AVCC) ‘Code of Practice for the Provision of Education to International Students’. While the Code functions as a guideline for conduct rather than as a regulatory mechanism, the preamble to the Code states: “the provision of education services to international students, both onshore and offshore, by Australian universities brings with it the ethical commitment that quality education be provided and that value be given for the investment made by international students” (2002, p. 1).

This commitment reflects Ellis’ perspective that, stripped to its essence, quality is that which satisfies (gives value) to the consumer. Universities can represent their commitments in various ways. For example, they often place a transformative value on quality, so that a quality aim of the education they are providing becomes the empowerment of students and the enhancement of their capabilities. Some universities employ a ‘fitness for purpose’ approach. For example, the quality management guidelines of an Australian university with a large investment in offshore education state that the “University’s approach to quality is demonstrated in terms of ‘fitness for purpose’, in which feedback from students, partners and clients is critical in order to focus on meeting (and exceeding where possible) their needs and expectations”. As Lomas has observed, the fitness for purpose approach “requires that the product or service fulfils a customer’s needs, requirements or desires” (2001, p. 2). Rowley (1995) adds that with the fitness for purpose approach it is the customer who must articulate their needs and requirements. This is really the point. In promising

to provide quality education *to* international students studying overseas, Australian universities have placed the judgment with the students. It is *students' perspectives* on their experiences that ultimately enable judgments about the quality of offshore education provision.

The findings discussed in this paper emerge from three exploratory case studies of student perspectives on their experiences of studying offshore with Australian universities. The case studies were conducted in three key regions of offshore provision for Australian institutions – Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. The approach taken was qualitative in all three studies because qualitative methodologies are regarded as particularly effective for exploring perspectives (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1993). The studies were interpretive because the aim was to draw out student perspectives of their experiences of offshore education. As for the exploratory nature of the research, not too much time has passed since it was observed at the 16th Australian International Education Conference that “the issue of educational quality and cultural sensitivity from the international student’s perspective has remained largely ignored by the literature despite its relevance and importance” (Cox et al., 2002, p. 1). It is important to stress that the goal of the research was to understand student experience and identity formation in offshore education. This paper uses the findings of student experience and identity formation to draw out quality issues.

In this paper, the descriptors applied to students come from several sources and are used interchangeably. The Council of Europe and UNESCO recommend the term ‘transnational’ be used to describe students who are located in countries different to the one in which the awarding institution is based (IDP, 2000). In Australian higher education, such students are often referred to as ‘offshore’ or ‘overseas’ international students, although IDP (2000) has a preference for the ‘transnational’ descriptor.

1.1 *The Australian Higher Education Sector’s Engagement with Offshore Education*

Over the last two decades, there has been constant and accelerating growth in the number of international students studying with Australian higher education institutions. In the mid-1980s less than 5% of the total student population, or approximately 13,000 international students, were enrolled in Australian higher education (IDP, 2002). In Semester 2, 2003, there were an estimated 174,732 international student enrolments, which represented 21.5% of the total student population of Australian universities. The acceleration in international enrolments is expected to continue with a forecast that by 2025 the total demand for international higher education in Australia will exceed 996,000 students (IDP and the Centre for International Economics, 2002).

From 1904, when the first overseas students enrolled with Australian universities (Tootell, 1999), until the mid-1990s, Australian institutions offering education transnationally was a very marginal area. Since 1996, the trend in enrolments has been expanding demand for study options outside of Australia (IDP, 2000). In 1996, 12,563 international students, representing 21% of the total international student enrolment for that year in Australian higher education, were studying offshore. In 1997, 16,309 students were studying with Australian universities offshore. They represented 24% of the total international student enrolment. In 1998, the percentage of international students studying overseas was 28%. In 1999, 29,481 students, or 33% of the international enrolment, were studying overseas (IDP, 2002). In 2000, the international student enrolled with an Australian university was increasingly likely to be studying, not at a campus in Australia, but in Hong Kong, Singapore or Malaysia (Davis et al., 2000). In 2002, 45,000 students or 28% of Australia’s international students were studying at offshore campuses, and another 11,000, or 7% of international students, were studying by distance education (IDP, 2002). In 2002, the majority of international students studying offshore (65%) were undergraduates, but postgraduate students constituted the majority of students enrolled at offshore campuses (IDP, 2002). As mentioned, by 2004, Australian universities were enrolling more than 73,000 students offshore and demand for offshore education is expected to continue to grow and to do so at a faster rate than demand for onshore international education.

The growth in demand for offshore education is being addressed and encouraged by an expansion in the number of programs offered overseas. In 1997, Australian universities had established 174 offshore programs in Malaysia, 116 in Singapore, 110 in Hong Kong, 17 in China and 24 in Indonesia (AVCC, 1998). In May 1999, Australian universities were offering 581 offshore programs, mainly in Asia (Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee, 2001). By May 2003, the number of offshore programs on offer was 1,569, with more than 70% of the programs located in China (including Hong Kong), Singapore and Malaysia (NTEU, 2004). All Australian universities have established offshore programs (NTEU, 2004). According to Meares (2003), Australian universities are increasingly inclined to view offshore provision as a strategy enabling institutional expansion.

The pattern has not only been for increasing numbers of programs, but also for increasing ways to take them. In 1999, it was reported that most Australian universities had “twinning” arrangements in place, “whereby students could undertake part of a degree in their home country and part in Australia” (AVCC, 1999, p. 18). In 2003, the AVCC observed that some Australian universities are also “establishing campuses overseas, generally in partnership with local providers” (2003, p. 18). According to the NTEU (2004, p. 12), the models now include:

Twinning programs: Students may complete all their studies offshore. (Twinning programs still operate to enable students to take part of their studies offshore and part in Australia. However, the trend is for students to do all of their studies offshore.) Students usually have the same course material, lectures and assessment as those on the onshore campus. Academic staff in these programs are usually hired locally, but chosen by the Australian university according to established selection criteria. Sometimes, Australian staff may teach a portion of a program for a defined period.

Franchised programs: An offshore institution delivers an Australian university program. The Australian university retains control over the program and the responsibility for quality assurance. Australian academics are not made available to teach in franchised programs.

Moderated programs: An offshore provider teaches its own programs with quality assurance from an Australian university. The Australian university offers advanced standing to graduates of the offshore program.

Offshore campuses: An Australian university creates a campus offshore and employs local and Australian staff to teach in its programs.

Online programs: Programs are delivered through the internet, with support from Australian onshore staff.

There are numerous hybrids of these models. Typically, also, an Australian university will use a range of modes of delivery in its offshore operations. There may also be pronounced differences in the ways faculties, schools and departments within an institution understand and operate a particular model of program delivery. For example, one school may send its staff offshore to moderate, while another may conduct all moderation onshore.

1.2 *Structure of the Paper*

The following chapter outlines the method employed in the three case studies. In Chapters Three, Four and Five, the studies are reported individually. Each offers particular contributions to understanding student experience in offshore education. In Chapter Three, the case study concentrates on a group of students of Singaporean nationality, studying a masters by coursework degree program delivered in intensive mode in Singapore by an Australian university in partnership with a local provider. Chapter Four discusses case study findings on student perspectives of their experiences in undertaking a professional doctorate program in Hong Kong.

Chapter Five describes case study findings on student perspectives of their experiences as undergraduate and postgraduate students at an offshore campus in Malaysia. A cross-case analysis was conducted to highlight the commonalities and differences in the findings of the three cases and this is presented in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven draws together the implications for quality that stem from the research and makes recommendations aimed at assisting Australian universities ensure that the quality of the education they offer to offshore students is sound.

2 METHOD

The aim of the research reported in the following chapters was to investigate the experiences of international students studying with Australian providers transnationally. To this end, qualitative case studies were undertaken of students enrolled in courses delivered offshore by Australian universities. The research is conceptualised within the interpretive paradigm as it seeks to understand the experiences of students from their perspectives; the ‘frameworks’ through which they make sense of the world. Central to the interpretive paradigm is the importance on the perspectives of people as individuals. From an interpretivist position, the social world is subjective. Each individual constructs his/her own social reality. In order to understand social reality, it is therefore necessary to study how individuals interpret the world: “social life can be adequately understood only from the point of view of the actors themselves” (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1993, p. 28).

The conceptual framework of the research is informed by social practice theory, which views learning as a situated activity in which issues of cognition, context and social interaction cannot be considered in isolation from one another. As an aspect of social practice, learning involves the whole person; “it implies not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities – it implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 53). Our line of inquiry therefore involved questions about the identity of offshore higher degree students and how they understand the particularities of their educational context and their sense of themselves as students in relation to the social communities to which they belong.

Identity is multi-dimensional. Wenger (1998) distinguishes five dimensions of identity, summarised by Sachs (2003, p. 125) as follows:

- identity as *negotiated experiences* where we define who we are by the ways we experience ourselves through participation as well as the way we and others reify ourselves;
- identity as *community membership* where we define who we are by the familiar and the unfamiliar;
- identity as a *learning trajectory* where we define who we are by where we have been and where we are going;
- identity as a *nexus of multi-membership* where we define who we are by the ways we reconcile our various forms of identity into one identity; and
- identity as a *relation between the local and the global* where we define who we are by negotiating local ways of belonging to broader constellations and manifesting broader styles and discourses.

As Sachs states, “identity and practice mirror each other” (2003, p. 126). The perspective taken in this research is that the rules of social practices prescribe particular kinds of roles for students. To take up and maintain a role as an international student ‘offshore’, it is necessary to engage in particular kinds of activities in particular kinds of ways. Moreover, it requires participation in a particular community of practice. This is mediated by the other social roles that the students may take up. The approach therefore takes account of the contexts of work, family and study. The research focused on the social practices of higher education delivered through offshore programs; on what students do and how they talk about what they do as they engage in this situated learning. The case studies also explored the impact of the following factors on the formation of student identity. These factors provided an analytic framework for the study:

- the reasons for choosing to enrol in a particular program;

- the social practices of the educational program; and
- the integration of family, work and study.

The case studies were chosen to relate to models of offshore delivery identified already (NTEU, 2004), while also containing some variation and a spread of locations. They were:

- a twinning program offered in Singapore by an Australian university with the involvement of a local private company which is responsible for local marketing and administrative processes. The masters by coursework degree consists of six units of study plus a major paper. Component units are delivered every two and a half months in Singapore by staff from the Australian university. Each unit comprises 25 hours of class time. Assessment is by assignments usually due six weeks after the cessation of class contact for the unit. In this period, students and lecturers communicate with each other by email.
- a twinning program offered in Hong Kong by an Australian university with the involvement of a government-funded local university partner. The program is a professional doctorate operated and delivered by the Australian university at the campus of the university partner. The course involves a combination of coursework and thesis offered over a part-time enrolment period of four years, with the coursework component delivered offshore by the Australian university staff in four intensive 25 hour units during the first year. Following successful completion of the units, a principal supervisor and a second supervisor from the Australian university each visit the student twice a year.
- a range of pre-university, undergraduate degree and higher degree programs delivered at the Malaysian campus of an Australian university. The curriculum for each program mirrors that offered at the main campus in Australia. Unit materials are written by Australian university staff and taught by full-time locally employed staff. Australian staff travel to the offshore campus twice each year to liaise with local staff and to moderate examination papers. Students have the opportunity to spend one or both semesters of their final year of study at the main Australian campus.

The primary data gathering methods were qualitative surveys of all students in each program and two rounds of semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted individually with six students from each group. The surveys and interviews explored student perspectives on their reasons for choosing their program of study, how they managed their study, and how they coped with the various demands of home, work and study. The initial survey was also used to generate issues for further exploration in the individual interviews. One round of interviews was conducted prior to a teaching session or term, and one 'in situ' during the period that the program was being delivered. Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes. Participants were invited to check their interview transcripts to ensure an accurate representation.

In order to provide a variety of perspectives, selection of participants for individual interview ensured that within each cohort there was a gender balance, variation in number of units completed and variation in racial and ethnic background. In addition, document reviews were conducted of program information that outlined objectives, teaching schedule, outcomes, assessment guidelines and faculty policies. Data was analysed using grounded theory methods, which involve systematic coding and analytic procedures (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Each case was analysed for similarities and differences in perspectives among participants, and driven by emergent themes. A cross-case analysis explored commonalities across the individual cases to develop propositions.

3 CASE STUDY 1: SINGAPORE

Cox is very much in the mainstream in suggesting that “recognition and accommodation of cultural differences are essential to the success of offshore courses” (2002, p. 3). Clearly, educational quality requires cultural sensitivity within educational programs presented offshore by Australian universities. The over-arching aim in this chapter is to draw attention to a previously unrecognised acculturation issue in offshore education, an issue that has implications for quality. The argument developed is that international students studying in their own country in programs operated by organisations from outside their country can be subject to ‘culture shock’. Within higher education it is the international student who travels away from home to study who is typically identified as the subject at risk of culture shock. This discussion attempts to go further by suggesting that international students, studying in their home country with an overseas institution, may also experience culture shock as an effect of this engagement. To support this contention, the chapter reports on findings of an interpretive, small-scale, qualitative case study of a group of students of Singaporean nationality, studying in a masters degree program taught in Singapore by an Australian university in partnership with a local provider.

3.1 *Culture Shock and the International Student*

The term ‘culture shock’ was first employed by Oberg (1960). Oberg lists six characteristics of this phenomenon:

- strain or stress relating to psychological adaptation;
- a sense of loss or deprivation resulting from the removal of friends, status, role, and personal possessions;
- fear of rejection by, or rejection of, the new culture;
- confusion in role definition;
- unexpected anxiety, disgust or indignation regarding cultural differences; and
- feelings of helplessness, including confusion, frustration and depression.

Indications that international students experience culture shock in taking programs that are offered by ‘foreign’ universities can hardly be ignored. Concerns about student welfare legitimate an interest. Under threat, too, is the quality of the educational experience. This is a matter to trouble academics engaged in teaching international students and Australian universities seeking to live up to their legal and ethical obligations to provide their international students with quality education. Of course, reputations may be damaged, quality audits may produce unfavourable results and the market share of international students may dwindle for universities unable to meet their promise of quality.

It is not surprising, then, that there is a substantial body of literature dealing with international students’ experiences of culture shock. The literature varies in that the emphasis can be on the identification of the practices and approaches that may contribute to culture clashes, on the psychological and emotional stresses and strains that characterise the experience of cultural disharmony, or on the student’s capacity to manage the situation. Often, the starting position for the discussion is that a foreign learning environment encompasses or expresses foreign cultural values that can disorient the international student who comes into the situation with their own cultural baggage. The perception is that the student caught in these circumstances is obliged to make adjustments in order to make sense of the learning experience. This raises questions about how the student deals with the culturally unfamiliar and about approaches to resolving cultural incongruities and dissimilarities. It also invites questions about the individual’s capacity to make adjustments. Overall, however, the literature takes as the subject of culture shock in higher

education, the international student who *has left their own country* and travelled to study at a university in another country. (See, for example, the work of Carroll, 2002; Vogt, 2002; De Vita 2001; Hellmundt, 2001; Robertson et al., 2000; Asmar, 1999; Biggs, 1999; Sinclair and Britton Wilson, 1999; Chalmers and Volet, 1997; Ballard and Clanchy, 1997; and Beasley and Pearson, 1996). The association that is made between physical re-location and the experience of culture shock is pronounced in the literature and has probably contributed to a failure to conceptualise or recognise culture shock as a prospect for international students who study in their home country with an overseas university. As an example of the emphasis given to physical re-location, in their discussion of the impact of culture shock on international students in language programs, Crew and Bodycott remark: "Periods spent abroad place participants in contexts that challenge their cultural beliefs, attitudes and understandings of the country in which they reside" (2001, p. 3). They continue: "participants sent abroad to enhance language competence and cultural understandings may in the course of their immersion suffer the negative, disabling effects of culture shock, which in turn may severely influence the likelihood of the programs achieving their stated aims. Put simply, the anxiety and stress induced by immersion in a foreign culture and language may have an adverse impact on the efficacy of language immersion programs" (p. 3). A further illustration is provided by Ryan and Hellmundt: "the prior learning experiences and academic traditions of countries from which international students are drawn can significantly impact on learning experiences and outcomes in new learning environments. The effects of 'culture shock' on individuals' health and emotional well-being have been well recognised" (2003, p. 2).

There can be no criticism of the particular interests of these scholars, or of the desire to investigate the effects of culture shock on onshore international students. Still, taking the literature as a whole, it is hard not to question whether the focus on onshore international students is partly because of their particular visibility to universities and researchers alike. Although offshore international students studying in their home countries may be 'out of sight' it is important that an awareness develops that these students can also find themselves in very foreign learning environments, where approaches and values clash with their prior learning experiences and conflict with their expectations.

To avoid the travel component of the 'stranger in a strange land' thesis, this discussion draws on an application of culture shock that does not require travel abroad: "Culture shock applies to any new situation, job, relationship, or perspective requiring a role adjustment and a new identity. In a broader more general sense, culture shock applies to any situation where an individual is forced to adjust to an unfamiliar social setting where previous learning no longer applies" (Pederson, 1995, p. 1).

This application facilitates the argument that the international student who pursues their education *in their homeland* also has to be considered as a candidate for culture shock. A question that may be prompted by this discussion is whether culture shock can be anywhere near as severe for international students who study in their homeland as for students who travel to foreign countries to study. Australian universities are committed to providing *all* international students offshore with quality education, so the question is perhaps irrelevant. Nor is it the intention in this discussion to establish equivalences or put the claims of one kind of international student over another. However, from the perspective of the authors, the student experiences in offshore education that will be recounted later in this discussion should discourage the idea that culture shock is necessarily less of a problem for the offshore than the onshore international student.

The 2002 AVCC Code of Practice maintains that Australian universities should provide cross-cultural training programs for academics before they depart for offshore teaching. This recommendation has not been universally adopted, but its existence may appear to indicate that there is some appreciation that offshore education can lead to experiences of culture shock. However, this recommendation seems to stem from the view that it is the traveller (in this case the academic who has ventured abroad from their home campus) at risk of experiencing cultural

disorientation. There is no recommendation from the AVCC for equivalent training for students participating in offshore education. It is, anyhow, difficult to accept that as it is currently envisaged, cross-cultural training for academics is likely to do much to alleviate culture clashes for students. There are many different sites of offshore education, many kinds of program organisation, and, of course, many, many classrooms, each one with its own culture. Training one of the participants in cultural interaction does not really present as a solution to all of the quality challenges. Another interesting aspect of the focus on acclimatising academics is that it seems to presume culturally homogeneous offshore student populations. Currently, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong are the three main sites for Australia's offshore programs (IDP, 2002) and each of these countries boasts that it has a multicultural society.

Some Australian universities offer website information of a cultural nature for academics travelling to teaching work offshore. Without identifying these universities, what can be observed is that cultural advice is usually 'big picture' information about politics, practices and values. On several websites, there is some advice on how to protect quality by implementing particular pedagogical strategies. However, it is worth pointing out that once again information is available for only one of the actors in a complex relationship. Australian universities typically have quality guidelines for offshore teaching (IDP, 2000), but it can be observed that best practice in the Australian higher education environment is usually the determinant of the approach endorsed for offshore pedagogy. One of the claims that will emerge in this discussion is that quality in teaching offshore is not necessarily assured through following models of practice that work at home.

One way in which an offshore student's cultural knowledge or cultural proclivities is directly addressed is through the inclusion of 'local' content in offshore courses (IDP, 2000). Again, it is the academic, usually the course co-ordinator, who determines what inclusions are relevant. As this discussion will show, such inclusions may not fully meet student expectations (and prior experiences) of an *international* education. While student evaluations of programs may provide an opportunity for universities to reduce cultural incongruities and dissimilarities, this is a piecemeal solution and a perusal of student evaluation forms used in offshore education does not reveal any that enable students to expose fully issues arising out of cultural dislocation.

To pursue the argument that international students studying in their homeland with overseas universities can experience culture shock as a result of these engagements, the experiences of international students of Singaporean nationality, studying in an offshore program run in Singapore by an Australian university (a twinning arrangement) will be considered in respect of findings from previous studies (Ryan and Hellmundt, 2003) concerning the experiences of culture shock reported by international students studying in Australia. The discussion uses data from a case study made by the authors of students in offshore education (Chapman and Pyvis, 2005), which is then compared to findings from previous empirical research undertaken by Ryan and Hellmundt. The goal is not to detail all the possible permutations of culture shock for offshore students, but simply to illustrate through the findings of an exploratory, interpretive, qualitative case study that international students studying in their homeland with universities situated in other countries should also be incorporated into quality analyses regarding the nature, effects and consequences of culture shock for international students. The focus is also on classroom culture, rather than ethnic/cultural difference as the context for culture shock. It is reasoned that it is important to investigate the relationship between modes of offshore delivery and student experience.

3.2 The Case Study Research

This discussion draws on the data and findings of a small-scale, qualitative case study of a masters' degree by coursework delivered in 2003 in Singapore by an Australian university in partnership with a local provider. The inquiry was not intended to be generalisable to all

international students studying with foreign universities in their own homelands. Rather, it was intended as initial exploratory work to open up this little-researched area.

The 26 students who participated in this study were enrolled in the same unit in a masters degree by coursework provided by an Australian university in conjunction with a Singaporean partner. All of the students were Singaporean nationals. There were 14 females in the study and 12 men. The ages of the students ranged from early twenties to late forties and they were all in professional employment. There were 22 students who were of Chinese ethnicity and four students of Indian descent. While the students were all in the same class, some were new to the program while for others the unit was the second, third or even sixth undertaken. The reason for this interesting classroom composition was that like many transnational programs, this program had flexible points of entry with students able to commence their studies in any of the six units. The program maintained its viability by building numbers in units as each new intake of students merged with previous intakes. To be accepted into the program, students had to have a four-year degree, or equivalent, with at least two years full-time relevant professional experience or evidence of research capacity. The program consisted of the six units or courses of study plus a major discussion. The units were delivered every two to three months in Singapore and were taught face-to-face exclusively by senior academic staff from the Australian university. Completion time for the six units was approximately fifteen months. An additional period of six months was allowed for the major discussion. Each unit comprised 25 hours of class time, conducted during one week over weekday evenings and the weekend. Assessment was by written assignments usually due six weeks after the cessation of class contact for a unit. In this period, students could access unit lecturers and administrators by email.

3.3 *Findings and Discussion*

It has been established that there has been a particular focus in the empirical literature on experiences of culture shock reported by international students studying in a country foreign to them. From this literature, one discussion judged particularly useful is that of Ryan and Hellmundt (2003). Their paper reports on research into the experiences of predominantly Asian (and Singaporean) international students, who come to Australia to study with Australian universities. Ryan and Hellmundt ground their work in a good discussion of culture shock and make these observations about their research: “the researchers’ own experiences as international students in foreign speaking learning environments, and as teachers of international students in Australian universities, have impacted on our own understandings of the impacts of cross-cultural travel. Our research interests, conceptualisations and methods of analysis have been informed through personal experiences of travelling across academic cultures, and experiencing these as ‘outsiders’. We believe this has led to our examination of educational and academic cultures through a different lens, and has enabled us to develop deeper understandings of the impacts of the internationalisation of universities from the perspectives of international students and their lecturers. Our research, conducted independently, found remarkable similarities of the issues and experiences reported by both international students and their lecturers” (2003, p. 4).

These “remarkable similarities” of issues and experiences provide an opportunity to bring in the experiences of the students who participated in the Singapore case study for comparison. It is useful to use the major concerns of participants in the studies of Ryan and Hellmundt as a reference point for this comparison: “the major issues reported by students were about difficulties they had understanding, making sense of their learning, feeling excluded or marginalised, or feeling that their perspectives were not valued” (2003, p. 4).

To further the goals of this discussion, the focus will be on the first three major issues reported. If difficulties in understanding, making sense of learning and feeling excluded or marginalised can be read as consequences of culture shock, then there are opportunities for comparisons. In this context, the newness of the learning situation and requirements for role adjustments created difficulties in understanding for many of the students participating in the study conducted in

Singapore by the authors of this paper. A comment by one female student who was undertaking her second unit of study in the program serves as a useful example of a commonly experienced problem:

When the lecturer asks us for an example sometimes it can be real, sometimes it can be a made-up one, as long as we understand what you want us to understand and present, but being new, you tend to read more into the words and to analyse and it slows you down and you become very worried. Am I right? Am I wrong? This is how I felt the first time. But I'm getting the hang of it and just enjoying myself, just throwing out my ideas and seeing whether I'm on the right track.

In this example, the problem is that the student does not have the cultural knowledge to determine if lecturers require “real” examples or manufactured ones. The concentration given to trying to understand what is required creates learning difficulties and uncertainty about how to respond to the lecturer. While students often commented that the situation was most stressful when they were singled out by a lecturer to provide an example in front of the whole class, several also remarked that uncertainty about what was wanted also created confusion for students undertaking group activities. Instead of seeking examples, students would often spend much of their time in their groups discussing whether real or made-up examples were required.

An observation by another student in the Singapore study exposes another instance, typical of the group, of what certainly can be considered role adjustment in order to make sense of learning:

Being new, you take everything very seriously and you write down everything the lecturer wants you to write. I have done several modules and now for me I prefer to listen, and try to conceptualise and understand, and see how I can apply. So it has become more application for me, because I want to pick up something new, a new skill, a new theory, a new principle that I can bring into my job scope and see how I can apply, rather than I just learn it and agree with the lecturer all the time.

It is virtually axiomatic in offshore education that a variety of educators are needed to teach a program. Of course, the same situation applies onshore, but often students in a unit onshore have taken prior units with the same lecturer. This is less likely to be the case in offshore education, because lecturers tend to specialise in one particular unit. Also, onshore, units are conducted usually over a period of months and the relatively leisurely pace provides the opportunities for gradual adjustment and acclimatisation to lecturing styles. This is not necessarily the case offshore, as the reflections of a third student from the contingent in Singapore reveal:

Lecturers have their own way of doing things, and sometimes, if you are looking at the point of view of the student, it can be a little disruptive, you see, because every person has a different style ... even their handing out of notes, even their delivery of the lecture. Some believe totally in powerpoint presentation; some only believe in you being in charge of your own studies, being an active constructor of your own knowledge so you make up your notes with no highlights from the lecturer, just discussion. When you have to switch from one lecturer's style to another, sometimes in the same week, it's a little difficult at times. But, looking at the other side, it's good to have different approaches and different styles as it enhances your way of studying.

Participants in the study conducted in Singapore did not report that their perspectives were not valued. Indeed, views were typically inclined towards the opposite direction. Therefore, it is not possible to make a comparison helpful to our argument on the issue of undervalued perspectives. However, the other major issue identified by Ryan and Hellmundt, the issue of feeling excluded

or marginalised, provides an opportunity for a striking comparison. These authors take the view that feelings of being excluded or marginalised are associated with feelings of rejection, that is, with Oberg's third characteristic of culture shock. Fear of, or the experience of, rejection were absolutely fundamental to the experience of most of our study participants. Those for whom it was not as marked had typically been in the program the longest. While it had, at some point, been a major issue for them, it still lingered as a cause for concern. There were very few students who reported feeling that they had been fully able to resolve the problem identified as "fitting in" (even those in their sixth unit of coursework study in the program).

Our research suggests that the experience of culture shock in terms of exclusion is probably most profound for initiates into a program. When they were in the classroom for the first time, the experience led them to *begin* their international education feeling excluded or marginalised. Comments by two students, one of whom was in his second unit and the other who was having her first experience of study in the program, illustrate the point:

I have one lady who was sitting beside me yesterday and she was very worried and anxious, just trying to find someone that she can click to because this is her first module. I shared with her that I was anxious and lonely in the first module.

At first, when I joined the group I felt very lost because you could see that everyone was sitting according to their intake, with people who had been through the same modules. They sit with their clique. And it's very clique-ish and when a new person comes they don't acknowledge you and so you just have to be the one approaching them and introduce yourself. They do not let you in easily.

It is not the concern here to delve deeply into the reasons why new students to the class experienced a sense of exclusion. It is possible that the mix of intakes accentuated the problem of culture shock experienced as a feeling of "not belonging". On the other hand, it may be that the pursuit of an identity through cohort affiliation was simply a response to culture shock produced by being in a foreign learning environment. A comment from a student in their fourth unit of study in the program in Singapore shows that distinguishing cause from effect is not simple:

The people who we are going to do this one week with, that's a short period of time. I can't talk to them. I don't know who they are. We have not had any communication. It's going to be really difficult to generate discussion in class. That's what I've been feeling for a while. But with the people in your intake, that's a solidarity thing. And it's a sense of belonging. You feel it is lucky you have friends who joined the course with you, starting with you and finishing with you. You feel that comfort – at least there is someone I can discuss with.

It has been mentioned that the problem of "fitting in" described by many participants in our study aligns with Oberg's third characteristic of culture shock. In terms of Oberg's second characteristic of culture shock, which in part is explained in terms of a sense of loss or deprivation resulting from the removal of friends, it is significant that many of the participants in the Singapore study, for example, the student whose comment has been used above, found it essential to form new friendships to provide comfort. Arguably, the drive to make new friendships comes from a sense of deprivation.

For most of the participants in this case study, forging a new identity as a member of a cohort amounted to only a partial resolution of the difficulty involved in "fitting in". A primary identification with cohorts apparently made it difficult for students to see themselves belonging to the class group as a whole. Again, these difficulties can be read in terms of Oberg's characteristics of culture shock, especially perhaps in terms of rejection fears, feelings of

helplessness and anxiety and confusion in role definition. The following comment is typical of the perspectives of the students in the Singapore case study and can serve to indicate the association:

The hardest thing in the courses is the actual cohorts mixing. If you are not comfortable with the people around you, everything just doesn't seem to settle down. You just worried, you know, just looking at people. You are just so worried about it. The hardest thing is fitting in.

Even for 'old hands', each new unit apparently resurrected the problem of 'fitting in'. Status and authority in the classroom were at least partly determined by identification with a cohort. The most senior cohorts had the highest status, which created further difficulties for students trying to 'fit in':

I sit with my friends, people who were in the same uptake as me and have done the last four modules. It is very difficult to generate conversation with people who have just started with this as their first module because psychologically they are not prepared.

In a discussion dealing with the challenge of sustaining academics teaching 'offshore', Debowski remarks: "Hospitable students may also host dinner with their teachers, leading to very long and intensive days for the academic" (2003, p. 2). Since the attention of this discussion is on the offshore student, it is worth offering a slightly different view of this practice of hospitality. This is not an aside to the issue of culture shock, because it reveals how entrenched the cohort identity can become, which in turn seems likely to testify to the intensity of the initial experience of "not belonging".

While conducting this research in Singapore the authors were invited to dine as guests of another postgraduate class in an offshore program. Though we dined with the whole group, we received our dinner invitation from two members of the longest-serving cohort in the class. We were shepherded into sitting at a table occupied by other members of this cohort. At the end of the meal we were able to "visit" the tables of the other students in the group. It should be noted that the high status of the students at our table appeared to have very little to do with social background, gender, occupation or ethnicity, but appeared to be a consequence of their longevity in the educational program. The same principle applies to the classroom clique hierarchy described by our participants. Our study took place in Singapore and most of the students were of Chinese origin. This is a matter to be considered because arguments have been made (for example, Debowski, 2003) to the effect that Chinese students tend to set up status hierarchies in their classroom communities and it is not possible to rule out some kind of pre-disposition towards this kind of organisation. However, from what was observed and from the discussions with participants, it was seniority amongst the cohorts that determined who was placed at the apex of the community structure in the mixed-cohort classroom.

In their account of their findings, Ryan and Hellmundt report on possible approaches to negate culture shock: "what students particularly liked was when lecturers provided lecture and tutorial notes in advance, gave them opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and experience in group discussions or in assessment tasks, and provided opportunities for their knowledge to be valued in the class and to form friendships with local students" (2003, p. 4).

The obligation on educators to create a good learning environment is a standard quality consideration and it is virtually axiomatic to notions of best practice that one of the means of achieving this supporting environment is by demonstrating an interest in student lives and encouraging the "sharing" of information about beliefs, ambitions and pursuits. This kind of approach is also seen to be useful for the education of international students. For example, Crew and Bodycott (2001) promote the virtues of promulgating culturally open attitudes and extensive

communication between educators and onshore international students. Extrapolating from the findings of Ryan and Hellmundt, international students studying in Australia generally may be delighted to be given the opportunity to divulge and to share. However, in the Singapore study it was found that the exercise of teaching strategies designed to produce “open” communications and mutual trust and respect could send some of the Singapore students into private agonies. Problems could begin with the first endeavour at familiarisation:

The first question lecturers ask is how many of you are doing this as your last module, how many are doing this as your first module and this is hard on new students.

Students in the Singapore study typically “hated” being identified by seniority in a program, unless they were in the last or near-last units prior to the major discussion. So the intended friendly question, the overt effort to get to know the students in a class, simply backfired, and generated fears of rejection and presented possibilities of being excluded, marginalised, or shown to be of lower status than other students. Rather than averting culture shock and engendering quality, a request for a student to publicly demonstrate their knowledge and history could precipitate the experience. Best practice question and answer strategies used with onshore international students in Australia were not necessarily productive for students in our study.

The participants in the Singapore study were all professionally employed, but generally, they did not welcome the opportunity to talk about their work. Asked for public exposure, they were often inclined to hide their professional knowledge and experience. The following student comment typifies the concerns of many of her classroom peers:

In the class I don't know everyone. There might be people who work in my area or know people I work with. So, I think it's better to use examples from outside of my work because it is less risky. I try to use more generic, not so specific to imply a certain thing. Rather than using my work I would tend to bring in my experiences in the community centre setting in my discussions in groups and in the class, so that I will not offend anyone who is also in my profession or who might then decide to badmouth me where I work. Yeah, so I tend to use another analogy, another example, not from my work.

When the lecturer asks us to talk about our work, we just keep our mouths shut because some of the people in the class could be heads or bosses doing the same program. The lecturer says how can we apply this knowledge to correct weaknesses in our work and we say 'Oh, no weaknesses; only strengths'.

Another frequent observation offered by participants in the Singapore study was that public inquiries about private lives brought an unintentional focus on cultural difference and that such questions bordered on being uncomfortably intrusive. To illustrate this viewpoint, here is a comment made by one of the senior students in the program:

In Singapore everybody is different. There's ethnicity, religion, language differences, and somehow, over the years we have been coping quite well. We can talk about these issues, but we try to be sensitive. We do not emphasise difference. When we are asked to talk about ourselves in class, it can be difficult.

If international students studying in Australia are given some respite from the culture shock of the foreign learning environment through the opportunity to talk about their interests, knowledge and experiences, the data from the Singapore study does not suggest such accommodation may be of much comfort to students studying offshore.

Comparison of the studies involving onshore and offshore international students reveals that students in offshore programs may experience culture shock as a result of their immersion in such programs. The intention now is to use the Singapore case study data a little more, in order to indicate some other potential experiences of culture shock for the offshore student. A consistent theme in the Singapore case study was that participants enrolled with an overseas institution because they were attracted to the idea of receiving an international education. For many of them, ‘international’ obviously meant more than the inclusion of local content in an otherwise Western framework. For these students, there was what may be described as culture shock in finding out that an ‘international’ education has its limitations, as two students, who were nearing the end of the program, explained:

In my course of study I realised that there’s lots of materials, reading materials, that we are getting from the Western culture and in fact I find there’s not many from the Asian perspective and not many from the Middle East. The Middle East perspective, I think they have a lot to share. I think, in the Middle East, civilisation has been there for years, when Europe was in the dark ages. What are their findings, with regard to their own context?

We need more of an international focus, rather than just focusing on a US culture, or a UK, or Australian. I feel that it is really sad because we talk about child development, things like that, a lot of it coming from the Greek, Rousseau, coming from the European side. My friends say, we have scholars in China that talk about child development. I say, where is the literature?

To reiterate, an aspect of culture shock is “that it applies to any new situation, job, relationship, or perspective requiring a role adjustment and a new identity”. In the Singapore study, most participants had to deal with the competing demands of study, family and work. This, in itself, is not an unusual problem for postgraduate students. However, the particular mode of delivery of the program created special difficulties. Students typically reported that they could not “assimilate” what was being said in class. Essentially, their prior learning experiences were of semester-length class contact. This led to some confusion about the purpose of the intensive 25 hours of class contact. Students commonly “adjusted” by treating class instruction as an overview of course content. The compressed nature of the units of study also meant that students had less time to balance family, work and study commitments. For the majority of students in the study, and for both ethnic backgrounds, work and family took priority over study. The demands of the compressed unit challenged these priorities and created difficulties for many of the students, often obliging them to at least temporarily re-negotiate relationships outside of the classroom.

Ryan and Hellmundt (2003) identified some common major concerns that international students studying at Australian universities had as a result of their immersion in foreign learning environments. In this chapter, we have demonstrated that the students participating in the Singapore case study experienced many of the same kinds of difficulties. We were not looking for major issues that could be associated with experiences of cultural dissonance, so we cannot claim that students in our study experienced difficulties in understanding or making sense of learning as major concerns. However, many participants did raise these kinds of issues. Certainly, the feeling of being excluded or marginalised was an absolutely critical concern.

Ryan and Hellmundt found teaching strategies that apparently work to avert or negate culture shock for onshore international students generally, at least in the Australian higher education environment. Evidence from our case study shows that these same strategies could generate or exacerbate culture shock for international students in offshore programs. The data was also used to illustrate that offshore education can pose particular culture shock experiences. For example, participants in the Singapore study often had to manage some kind of reconciliation between the roles they were expected to pursue in their home culture and the role of the international student

studying “part-time”. The onshore international student in Australia is usually not allowed to take paid employment and in many cases suspends family responsibilities. Students who participate in offshore education programs have to find ways to accommodate all of these demands.

3.4 *Conclusion*

It is not really surprising that the issue of culture shock in international education has concentrated on the experiences of individuals who have travelled abroad to become what universities often refer to as onshore international students. The growth in offshore education has been relatively recent. It is understandable, too, that universities would focus on international students attending their central campuses. Also, since Oberg’s day, studies of culture shock have tended to assume that a culture foreign to an individual is in a country that is foreign to that individual. It is perhaps inevitable then, that studies that focus on a foreign learning environment often presume that the environment is logically contextualised by a foreign country. The attention that has been given to foreign language learning environments probably has also helped keep travel across borders as a prerequisite for culture shock.

However, the commitment to providing quality in offshore provision makes it important that the full dimensions of culture shock in international education are recognised. This discussion has suggested that culture shock can be experienced by students studying in their home country in programs operated by universities from other countries. It has attempted to draw attention to the offshore program as a locus for culture shock.

A matter that it has not been examined, but which follows on from the argument, is that offshore programs also need to be considered as a context for culture shock for students who are not in their home country. Student populations in offshore programs are increasingly heterogeneous and increasingly likely to reflect a variety of nationalities and ethnicities. While not a focus of the study reported here, this is certainly an issue worthy of further research.

The Singapore case study involved a program that combined student intakes into units. The students in the Singapore study experienced culture shock partly through their immersion in a particular mode of offshore education. The composition of class intakes and the intensive approach to teaching appear to have contributed to culture shock for these students. There is an abundance of different modes of offshore program delivery, including moderated programs, franchised programs, twinning programs, offshore campuses and online programs. Often, universities create hybrids from these models of delivery. It seems certain that these various and evolving modes of program delivery will generate their own, specific circumstances of culture shock. This must be of concern to universities seeking equivalences in the quality of the education they provide across different locations. It also raises questions about what kinds of cross-cultural training can be introduced to address very different, and arguably very individual, cultural milieu. Without further research, we do not know if one model of delivery exacerbates or minimises the difficulties of culture shock. While the case study utilised in this discussion was one small-scale, in-depth, exploratory study, it has opened up a number of possibilities. Further research is warranted.

4 CASE STUDY 2: HONG KONG

This chapter presents the findings of the case study research into the experiences and identity formation of students studying with an Australian university in Hong Kong. The students were enrolled in a doctorate program offered by the Australian university with the involvement of a government-funded local university partner. Entry requirements are a masters degree by research and relevant professional experience. This course involves a combination of coursework and thesis over a part-time enrolment period of four years, with the coursework component delivered offshore in four intensive 25 hour units during the first year. Following successful completion of the units, a principal supervisor is appointed to each student. This supervisor visits the student at least twice each year. A second supervisor visits twice each year, once with the whole cohort of students, and once with each individual student, to give additional assistance in academic writing and thesis structure. The students who participated in this case study had completed the coursework units and were in their second year of supervised research. They were all in full-time, professional employment.

It was found that, in this case, student identity can be characterised by a series of dilemmas experienced by the students as they seek to become members of the learning community. These dilemmas centre on a range of interrelated issues, including sense of belonging, educational goals, learning style preferences and relationships with supervisors.

4.1 *Background and Context*

The case study upon which this chapter is based is informed by the recent and rapid emergence of the professional doctorate within the postgraduate offerings of Australian universities (McWilliam et al., 2002). The Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies defines the professional doctorate as “a program of research and advanced study, which enables the candidate to make a significant contribution to knowledge and practice in their professional context [and in which] ... the candidate may also contribute more generally to scholarship within a discipline of study” (1998, p. 1). The professional doctorate is a further development of the ‘taught doctorate’, an award that includes a significant component that is both taught and formally assessed. Its key feature is that the field of study is a professional discipline rather than academic enquiry and scholarship (United Kingdom Council for Graduate Education, 2002).

The report ‘Research Training in Doctoral Programs’ describes as “remarkable” the increase in the number of professional doctorate programs in Australia, since their first appearance only a decade ago (McWilliam et al., 2002). Professional doctorate offerings in Australia between 1996 and 2000 more than doubled from 48 to 105 and projected student enrolments increased by more than 150% to 2,500 (Maxwell and Shanahan, 2001). There has been a parallel growth in interest in professional doctorates in Britain, the USA and Canada (McWilliam et al., 2002). It seems likely that the pressure on education systems to market courses overseas will see further growth in this area. Changes in teaching and learning, professional development and supervision practices will no doubt follow (McWilliam et al., 2002).

Previous research has found that membership of the academic community has been rated below professional learning and development by the ‘non-typical’ local and international student cohorts of professional doctorate programs (McWilliam et al., 2002). However, during the analysis of our Hong Kong case study data it became apparent that what constitutes the notion of the academic community is problematic. Student identity was found to be constructed through membership of a multi-layered ‘learning community’, including for example the international community, the classroom community and the professional community. Moreover, the conceptualisation of identity was characterised by a range of dilemmas to do with community membership.

The next section of this chapter portrays these dilemmas. It does so utilising Winter's (1982) classification of dilemmas as "ambiguities", "judgments" and "problems". In this classification, 'ambiguities' are defined as tensions which are tolerated; they constitute background awareness of inevitable complexities of a situation. 'Judgments' are dilemmas relating to the perceptions of those actions which are seen not as wrong but "complex and interesting" and which require a requisite skillfulness to be resolved. 'Problems' are those dilemmas arising out of a course of action which are of such a nature that they can undermine its validity and rationality.

4.2 *Dilemmas in the Case of Hong Kong*

4.2.1 Sense of Belonging

A major dilemma shared by the Hong Kong professional doctorate students was how to develop a "sense of belonging" to a university located at a great distance from where they live and study. This dilemma fits Winter's classification of a judgment, which relates to perceptions of issues not as wrong but "complex and interesting" and which require some degree of skillfulness to resolve. On the one hand, participants made deliberate and well-informed decisions to enrol in an offshore program, through which they sought membership of the community of international doctoral students. On the other hand, they expressed the shared view that it was not possible for offshore students to feel part of the university community. There was a clear need for students to be able to reconcile their various forms of identity – international student, university student, doctoral student, offshore student – into one form of student identity.

The main rationale for choosing an offshore program was to gain an international education. This was considered important for a variety of reasons, including, as one student stated, "to be aware of the current ... issues and reforms which are needed in [my] profession". In line with expectations of overseas students studying in Australia (O'Donoghue, 1996), participants expected the quality of an international university course to be high. In particular, it was generally assumed that the quality of teaching in an international program would be higher than in a local one. It was clear that the students had "shopped around", taking advantage of the increasingly competitive international market in higher education. Other factors influential program selection were reputation of the university, cost of the program, familiarity with the institution and, significantly, mode of study.

Consistent with recent case study research of Australian university courses delivered in Hong Kong (Evans and Tregenza, 2002), students in our study reported that they often worked long hours, had family commitments that conflicted with the demands of study, and had little support from employers to carry out workplace-based assignments. Since international programs are usually delivered in intensive-mode, the offshore model was perceived by students as being supportive of maintaining work and family commitments while studying. The common view was that doing a compressed course in a short amount of time, and knowing the schedule of classes in advance, was a clear advantage of their offshore program. The following comment is typical of participants' perspectives on this model:

Before I took up this course, I was shocked that all the teaching work is done in only a week. The workload may be very heavy, and also for the lecturers when they come to Hong Kong ... but I found it useful that only the week I need to go to [class] and then after that I can do my own work. It's more useful for some people that need to go to work.

Most students reported that being 'offshore', they did not feel as if they belonged to the university community. Feeling excluded or marginalised can be a major difficulty for international students in Australian universities (Hellmundt, 2001; Ryan, 2002). It is hardly surprising that students who are enrolled with a university located in another country, who do class work in intensive 25 hour blocks, and whose regular contact with lecturers is by email, express similar feelings. One

participant summed up the issue, stating that “attachment to the alma mater” is something that is missing for the offshore student. For this group, the learning community was necessarily confined to a local one, defined by relationships with thesis supervisors, lecturers and fellow students.

4.3 *Educational Goals*

Another identified dilemma was in relation to the anticipated outcomes of the program. This dilemma centred on what the students hoped to achieve from their studies, and how they went about realising their goals. For the majority of students, intrinsic goals such as personal and professional growth, self-fulfilment, self-development and “giving more meaning to my life” were major motivations for enrolling in the program. The following comments indicate the innate value of their studies to various aspects of their lives:

It's about self-fulfilment and it might secure my position here ... 80% is my self-fulfilment and 20% might be to try to guarantee I could be more employable when there is a budget cut.

To get a doctorate degree has been my long term wish ... it started in my heart that it seems something is missing. I want to relate my work to my study.

My study will enhance my work ... it adds to my own understanding and knowledge about what I am doing. It gives more meaning to what I am doing.

Professional learning and development was a significant educational goal. A key finding was that these students defined themselves, at least in part, by their learning trajectory towards gaining a doctoral degree. In this regard, they described themselves as “professional”, “career-oriented” and “academic”. The concept of “face”, or “gaining prestige”, was mentioned by several students as a motivating factor in embarking on further study. One student in the present study alluded to such an incentive as being the main motivating factor, but concluded that such Chinese values are “too complex and too difficult to explain to someone from outside”. This corresponds to the findings of research into the perceptions of Chinese students studying onshore in Australia. For example, Aspland and O’Donoghue (1994) found that the concept of face was a motivational incentive to work hard and avoid failure.

A problem that was reported by many students in the study was how to cope with the demands of the course in their already pressured lifestyles. Problems, according to Winter, are those dilemmas arising out of a course of action which are of such a nature that they can undermine the action’s validity and rationality. In contrast to the perceived intrinsic worth of the course, students’ comments on how they actually engaged with the coursework suggested that they were unable to devote as much time as they wanted to, or thought that they should, to their studies.

Reading material was sent to students several weeks before the delivery of each of the four coursework units, so that students could read and prepare for the classes in advance. However, nearly all students waited until their first class to collect these materials. One explained what was evidently a fairly common approach; “whenever I have time I usually do my reading while I’m travelling to work ... because it takes an hour from my home to here and also any spare time I get”. In practice, though, there was almost no spare time. This finding is supported by Evans and Tregenza (2002) who found that the heavy work and family commitments of Hong Kong students in Australian offshore courses made study difficult.

According to Ryan and Hellmundt (2003), mismatches in academic expectations and experiences are likely to be the main source of difficulties for international students with regard to teaching and learning practices. This was the case for these students, who were forced to take a course of action that was not necessarily consistent with their educational goals. All students stated that paid work took up most of their time, with family and study commitments being made to “fit in”.

We distinguished two groups, based on how they prioritised these commitments. One group comprised those students who prioritised work commitments over study and family activities. As one explained, “obviously work is top priority because study is supposed to supplement or reinforce work.” The other group, mostly women, were those who said that family commitments took priority over work and study. The following comment is typical:

My thinking is I'll schedule some time in my busy schedule for study. But it never works that way. I'll devote my sleeping time and all my spare time when there's a deadline. That is to say, when something's urgent at work, I work full gear towards that. When my sons are in trouble, I'll give them the highest priority. I would say work took up most of my time.

Despite the pressures of very busy work and home lives, the strong commitment by both groups to successfully completing their studies was evident, as indicated in the following comment:

I consider this my personal commitment. I use every single one of my long weekends, annual leave and casual leave and group them together and I try to get away from this place for two weeks or three weeks and then I stay just like a student, to catch up. I just couldn't manage to be too concentrated on all sorts of work.

4.4 Learning Style Preferences

A further dilemma emerged concerning conceptualisations of learning style. Within the classes, participants developed a strong sense of community through the perceived need to “fit in well with the kind of program”, as one put it. To this end, they were keen to engage with other students in small group discussions and workshop activities, acknowledging that they were unlikely to contact each other outside of class time. A common view was that their own backgrounds, as professionals and as international students at overseas institutions, prepared them well for any cultural differences in classroom practice. An anomaly here was students' reticence to discuss their own research projects in class. One participant explained that “Chinese are quite reluctant to discuss”. Another said that Chinese students were used to a learning style where they respond to questions when they are called by name.

The following comments, however, are more typical of the views of the participants:

For some of my classmates, they have totally different subjects and sometimes they find that English is a problem for them. I find it sometimes not very useful, because sometimes if one classmate is doing something on science subjects that night, I am totally ignorant of what the classmate's told me. I think for the students who have the same research area, the discussion part is more useful.

I think the discussions are useful, especially with lecturers.

I have learnt that if you take part in the discussion of your topic and actively participate you will really learn something. Because I know if you don't do something and you don't prepare something then you have nothing after the class.

On the whole, they agreed that cultural differences in teaching and learning styles are positive and not problematic for them as learners. One stated: “this gives me an edge because I can study cultural difference”. At the same time, students felt that cultural learning style preferences needed to be recognised and respected by lecturers. This dilemma fits Winter's classification of an ambiguity; a background awareness of inevitable complexities of a changing situation, but where

the tensions generated are tolerated. The ambiguity identified emerged out of the complexities generated by students' experiences and understandings of cultural learning differences.

The focus on identity concerned how participants understood their own experiences as learners, as well as how they both acted and identified with their class peers. These students were very much aware of the cultural stereotypes of Asian students as rote learners (Ballard and Clanchy, 1991; Phillips, 1990) and generally disagreed that this was the case for people enrolled in their course. There is a growing body of research that is critical of this stereotyping. For example, Biggs (1990) refutes the typecast, particularly the reference to Asian students as surface and rote learners. He suggests that this perception may be based on misunderstandings, and that "Chinese students generally have a more academic approach to learning (low surface, high deep) than Australians" (p. 1). More recently, Rambruth and McCormick (2001) found that, in their overall approaches to learning, Asian international students located in Australia may not be very different to Australian students.

The concern here is with how students' conceptualisations of their learning style contribute to the development of identity and community. For the participants of the case study, apart from discussing their own research projects, there was a clear preference for collaborative approaches to learning in the classes. However, there was a clear preference for individualistic learning approaches outside class. While this is in line with findings that Asian students show a preference for group learning and co-operative strategies in class (for example, Gatfield and Gatfield, 1994; Biggs, 1996) it is somewhat inconsistent with Tang's (1996) research that shows a preference by Hong Kong students to adopt collaborative approaches in researching and writing assignments. This suggests that the students in our case study were developing local ways of belonging, through classroom co-operation and collaboration, to the broader university and educational community. At the same time, they sought to maintain an intellectual independence with regard to their assignments and doctoral projects.

4.5 *Relationships with Supervisors*

For international postgraduate students in Australia, a number of inadequacies have been found to exist. Aspland and O'Donoghue (1994) reviewed research that highlights various concerns of overseas higher degree students, including the lack of regular meetings between student and supervisor, the failure of supervisors to adequately guide students in the design of their research and the inadequacies by supervisors in preparing students to collect and analyse data. Such deficiencies were not voiced by the students in this study. On the contrary, they all stated that they liked the model of several visits per year and regular email communication between visits. The schedule of visits was clearly understood and this meant students could plan their study around it. Personal learning style was also significant in this regard. One student stated that she "liked to be pushed", so was happy that her supervisor kept in constant contact, reminding her when drafts of chapters were due. Another was adamant that he "doesn't want to be pushed" and likes "to set my own deadline".

The majority view was that doctoral students have a responsibility to develop a good rapport with their supervisors. Here, students defined themselves as doctoral students, at least in part, by their relationship with their supervisor. Despite this shared perspective, the students had different views on how to go about developing positive supervision relationships. Several students felt that it was inappropriate to "bother" their supervisor, especially with questions that they thought might be considered trivial or inconsequential. They preferred instead to wait until the supervisor's next visit, which might be three or four months away. Another group included those who preferred to communicate via email, and were happy to initiate email contact. As one stated: "communicating electronically ... the same quality of teaching can be received." All participants agreed that it was inappropriate to send follow-up emails to supervisors who did not reply to their emails. Supervisor responses were typically made within a few days, but if there was a delay, students experienced conflict about what to do and what would be appropriate. So, while it was

felt that the onus was on the students themselves to develop a good relationship with their supervisor, beliefs about propriety caused dilemmas for some.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has reported the case study findings of research into the experiences and identity formation of professional doctorate candidates enrolled in a program delivered in Hong Kong by an Australian university. The formation of identity in this case is portrayed as a series of interrelated dilemmas in the students' educational experiences, based on issues such as a sense of belonging, educational goals, learning style preferences and relationships with supervisors.

The central theme concerns membership of the learning community, which was perceived by students to operate at various levels, from the broader international and university communities to the local classroom and supervision communities. The formation of student identity in this context is clearly not straightforward. The aim of the analysis presented here was to give insights into some of the complexities involved in actively constructing student identity through social relations and social participation. In doing so, it is hoped to draw attention to the impact of developments in an internationalisation on the formation of student identity, and to contribute to an emerging research agenda focusing on student experiences of offshore education.

5 CASE STUDY 3: MALAYSIA

To address quality considerations in education, it is essential to know who the ‘customer’ is. It is also vitally important to understand how forms of provision construct or constrain quality. The theme in this chapter is that transnational education is establishing new kinds of students in Australian higher education. This chapter highlights the *originality* of the combinations of students that are being engaged by *new and evolving models* of offshore program delivery. Findings from a qualitative case study conducted at an Australian university’s offshore campus in Malaysia are employed to develop this argument.

5.1 *New Kinds of Students*

It has been suggested that in the 1960s, young people in the West developed a generational awareness, partly as a consequence of their abundant numbers (Grossberg, 1992). Similarly, it may be that the singular growth in the numbers of international students in transnational arrangements in recent years is forging a kind of new collective awareness amongst these students. However, it is also the case that offshore education is delivered through a variety of modes and formats and generally concentrates international student populations in particular units or courses in particular discipline areas and at particular sites. Identity as an international student in offshore education is mediated by the circumstances of offshore provision and by personal experience (Chapman and Pyvis, 2005). Therefore, rather than associating offshore education with a new kind of student, it becomes necessary to think in terms of a *plurality* of possible identity formations. Any assumption that offshore programs are delivered to homogeneous concentrations of students hinders recognition of this diversity and we would argue that offshore student populations are far more eclectic than is usually recognised. For example, it would not be unusual for an offshore program delivered in Hong Kong by an Australian university to attract students from mainland China, Kampuchea, Europeans and ex-patriate Australians, and perhaps even India, Singapore and Japan. Malaysia is endeavouring to become a regional hub for education. In 2003, the Malaysian Government issued visas to 39,577 foreign students, from 164 different countries. Many of these non-local students entered Malaysia to study in offshore programs delivered by Australian universities. Recent media reports suggest that 50,000 visas will be issued for 2004 (The Borneo Post, 16/04/04), which would mean more disparate, offshore student populations in Australian transnational higher education.

Clearly, then, students undertaking a transnational education program may not be in their ‘home location’. They may be in a previously unvisited city, in a previously unvisited state or region, where there may be different customs and values, different ethnic mixes and different dialects from those they are used to. As discussed in Chapter Three, even the local student is not ‘embedded’ in the familiar due to the Australian origin of the program and the cultural diversity of their peer group.

New combinations of students filter through a variety of program articulations. Offshore provision is dynamic in its configurations. As the NTEU points out, “over the past decade there have been significant changes in the way universities have initiated and developed their offshore operations” (2004, p. 6). There are different models of offshore delivery and numerous differences in the application of models. Market competition means Australian universities are always working on customising their offerings, rendering offshore provision an evolving enterprise.

5.2 *Offshore Student Identity and Experience: a Neglected Subject*

With the contribution of the expanding offshore population, international education is now Australia’s eighth largest export and third largest service export industry (NTEU, 2004). It is

estimated that by 2012 income from offshore education will be worth more than \$1.5 billion a year (DEST., 2004). Since 1998, all Australian universities have recognised an “ethical commitment” to provide quality education and value for money to international students offshore through the AVCC Code of Ethical Practice in the Provision of Education to International Students by Australian Universities (Higher Education Division, DETYA, 1998). By virtue of their current and projected numbers, their short and long-term importance to the Australian economy, their centrality to strategies of expanding the capacities, finances and reputations of Australian universities and as the subject of ethical and pedagogical considerations, offshore students should be commanding attention. There should be a formidable body of work on student perspectives on their experiences of offshore education. Unhappily, there is not such a collection. Not available are the perspectives of students on, say, what it is like to be studying in a twinning program in Singapore or in a moderated program in Hong Kong.

Looking for explanations for the absence of attention to offshore student perspectives, the proclivities of educational researchers warrant consideration. Erickson and Schultz have remarked: “Virtually no research has been done that places student experience at the center of attention. We do not see student interests and their known and unknown fears ... rarely is the perspective of the student herself explored” (quoted in Jackson, 1992, p. 467).

Distance may be contributing to keeping the perspectives of offshore students on their educational experiences at the periphery of studies of international education. The Australian Senate’s Report on Higher Education (2002) observed “offshore operations receive less attention in Australia than other aspects of university operations, perhaps because they are ‘out of sight’”. Certainly, the literature on international students studying overseas is scant by comparison with the literature on international students studying in Australia.

It is perversely possible that the growth in offshore education actually draws attention away from student perspectives on their experiences in these operations. There is a view that the internationalisation of education is realised less through the geographic extension of activity than through the internal transformations of the institutions undertaking the process (Knight, 2003). It may be reasoned, then, that offshore expansion fixes scholarly attention on changes onshore. Looking for evidence of such a myopic gaze, it is interesting that the first major study of Australian offshore education, conducted by IDP in 2000, set its goal as seeking “to define the nature and scope of offshore provision from the perspective of Australian higher education institutions” (IDP, 2000). There are arguments that Australia’s international educators are being re-defined by the transformations to their practice. For example, Murray maintains international educators (in Australia) have evolved a “new professionalism”: “The term reflects a metamorphosis of identity, disposition and behaviour that has been evolving for more than a decade. It is as much about how we (international) educators perceive ourselves, as how others perceive us” (2003, p. 3).

Thus, the rapid expansion of internationalisation seems to have encouraged discoveries about the consequences and implications for universities and their staff. Internal transformations are presumed substantial, yet the offshore student is apparently ‘just another student in a different location’, unchanged and unremarkable.

5.3 *The Malaysian Research Project*

This case study was conducted with international students at an Australian university’s offshore campus in Malaysia. In operation for several years, this offshore campus provides a range of pre-university and degree programs to higher degree programs in Business Administration, Science, and Engineering, Commerce and Mass Communication. Students have the opportunity, but are not under any compulsion, to undertake part of their studies (usually the final year) at the ‘home’ campus in Australia. Degrees are awarded under the Australian Qualifications Framework, which seeks to ensure international recognition of qualifications.

The study involved qualitative surveys of 20 undergraduate and six postgraduate students and in-depth semi-structured interviews with eight of those students. The sample was not intended to be representative of the total student population. Rather, it was intended to give an indication of the spread of nationalities, ethnicities, language and cultural backgrounds across the spectrum of offshore programs delivered at the campus.

5.4 Case Study Findings

5.4.1 Choosing a Program

The range of factors that bore on program choice typically included cost, personal interests, career-path, prior learning histories, comparisons made on syllabus and program resources, accreditation, the reputation of the campus and the university, and advice from friends and relatives, particularly parents. However, in the first instance, what attracted students to any of the programs was their international designation. International accreditation was an important consideration, but students typically emphasised that they were “doing an international program to get international exposure”. The fact that the international program they chose was Australian in origin was relatively less important. As part of their commitment to quality in educational provision, Australian universities aim to encourage their students to develop an international outlook and the students in our case study were intent on achieving this goal.

International exposure was prized for a variety of reasons. Many students perceived that big corporations in Malaysia tend to draw on an international workforce and they wanted to be able to compete. There were also status reasons, as demonstrated by the following: “It is a bit vain, I guess. Here, in Malaysia, we would think that it is good to have something from the West, whether in terms of products or education”. Non-Malaysian students in the study were seeking a much more profound metamorphosis of identity, as typified by this comment: “I study an international program here, because I want to be an international person, not only a Chinese person”. For the non-Malaysian students, in particular, an international education was regarded as a critical aspect of their personal development that would ultimately produce an ‘international person’:

Most importantly, I am studying here to get exposure. I want to change myself. I want my personality, my character, to build. Here is the start. International students, international curriculum and international teachers mean I can progress.

I'm from Sri Lanka. I just came here on the way. I study here for the experience. I want to develop an international perspective. I've studied in UK before, and that experience opened my eyes. After, I try to live in another continent as well, build experience again.

Maybe some day I can go to the UK or US, be a citizen of the world. I think here is the foundation for me.

Many students in the study explained program choice in terms of the proximity of the campus to home and family. In terms of our proposition that there are new kinds of students in offshore education, the interesting point of departure from the norm is the global mobility of students and also their disposition to be mobile. Being ‘close’ to home and family could mean being in Malaysia, being in a country adjacent to the home country, or remaining in Asia. For a number of participants, proximity to home meant not being in the United States, or in Britain or Canada. Here is a typically relaxed perspective on distance: “Campus is not very far from home. Only a three hour flight.”

5.4.2 Social Practices of the Educational Program

All students expressed the view that their educational experiences at the offshore campus were acutely different from previous educational experiences. The student mix in the class exposed students to different ways of thinking about life. Two comments, from undergraduate students in different programs, reflect this sense of the novelty:

The Malay students say, 'Oh, you don't have brothers and sisters. How come, only yourself? Don't your mother and father feel lonely that you study here? They are alone.' I say, 'Yes, but all China's people now is only one child, and we used to it'.

With students, one is there in the class who likes to wear a golden ring. I said, 'Hey! The boy always wear ring, very big, like golden. It looks expensive.' They say. 'No. It's not gold. It's some other material.' Because they're not allowed to wear gold. Malaysian men, they're not to wear gold. So many new things!

Students typically reported that they did not experience their classrooms as homogeneous communities, but rather as novel aggregations of groups. These groups were sometimes demarcated along ethnic, national or cultural lines, but typically, in undergraduate classes, the differences centered around language:

Those who can speak Chinese are usually together. Those who speak Malay, the Malay group will sit together. The English speakers do the same and so do the other groups. You can see that quite obviously in class.

No-one calls me to a group, then I will go and join others who can speak my language.

Some lecturers say 'Don't speak in Chinese, don't speak in Malay. Try and speak in English'. For a while, people will start speaking English. Then they'll go back to their language. I think main thing for groups is language; location second. What bonds them is their language.

What the groups do is translation. Between each other, they will try to, you know, [understand] the questions in English, then they start translating maybe into Mandarin, or Cantonese, Korean, Persian, sometimes African languages.

The division of classroom populations into small communities poses challenges to many students and is an important quality issue. It was often difficult to forge an identity as a member of a class, yet students stressed the need to 'fit in'. The usual approach to a solution was to develop an identity as a member of one of the classroom communities. However, this, also, was not necessarily easy:

In class we can use Chinese when we talk, or use English, and some of the students speak Cantonese or Korean. It's really quite different, but I think it's easier to communicate with students with these languages than communicate with some of the African people. But all of them are very kind, certainly.

It took time to get used to, because in the classes the people are different from where I come from, Sri Lanka, so it took me some time. I've never met a Chinese before, so I found it hard to communicate at first, but now I'm all right. Picking up languages, sort of.

Actually, within the class, the tutor tries to form us into groups of different culture background. For example, if I'm in a group maybe I am with some Malay people and some other country's people. It just goes together, like the culture shock.

Sometimes it's hard to fit in. Even like me, I'm half-Chinese. I don't really speak Chinese, Mandarin, so quite hard sometimes because when discussion starts, they will start speaking their own native language, so I feel quite left out sometimes. It's hard to find a group, sometimes.

All the postgraduate students who participated in the research were taking master by coursework degrees. These programs offer intensive teaching and flexible entry points for students, such that students can commence their studies in any one of eight units in the program. The general descriptions were of classroom populations comprised of 'batches' of students. These groupings were not principally organised around language. Rather, students tended to cohere with others who had entered a program through the same unit. The batches can be thought of as cliques, because they served to exclude as well as include:

My group, eight of us, we've been together since last year, and then along the way we pick up two other batches. I was in the fourth batch. End of last year, the fifth batch join us. Then, early this year, sixth batch. We have our own seating arrangement, the fourth batch sit here, the fifth and sixth here. What we do, we actually divide the room, you know fourth, fifth, sixth. We talk, but we don't sit together. Very funny. Even when we go to the canteen it's the same thing.

My batch is nine people, but the lecturer likes to divide us into groups of three. Last unit, we had to get into groups of five, so we had to discuss who we wanted to bring in. So we decided actually to bring in someone from the second batch who had nobody.

New people, they simply sit down, I think, without realising that people actually sit in their batches. I notice that they feel a bit lost. Maybe in the first combined unit they do they feel a bit lost.

The mode of flexible entry and intensive delivery obliged students to seek membership in 'batches'. New forms of inclusion and exclusion, and notably, new identity formations, emerged in the classroom as responses to this particular delivery mode.

All students in the study reported experiencing new learning demands in studying for their degrees at the offshore campus. It is worth reproducing some of the observations, because they testify to the diversity of expectations and backgrounds of the students at the campus:

Learning here is actually very different. When I was in China, we used to have the lecture and always listen to what lecturer said. But here, they pay more attention on your own experiences. They like yourself to find more books, informations. Different books, what they said, what other people said.

Learning is quite tough. We did Malay in high school, so my writing was in Malay. So it was a transition here, from Malay to English.

At the beginning, I translate English to Chinese, but now I think more in English, is better. A lecturer told us, an English lecturer, you should think in English. You shouldn't think in Chinese and translate. It's a bad way. So I try to think in English.

I find here, the system in a sense is cramming. A whole lot in a particular week, that's what I've found, whereas in Canada, it's more like subject A, second week assignment due, subject B, week three assignment due. Something like that. Here is more all four subjects, week three, all our work is due.

There are a lot of differences. Back in my country, we don't have consultation hours with the lecturer. So you are forced to ask questions straight away after class. In Bangladesh, we have to refer to the lecturer as 'Professor' but here is more friendly, you can always call them by their first name. Third, the syllabus here is more updated.

My course is in block teaching, The 16 hours with foreign lecturer. Then there is 20 hours done by a lot of people. When I was studying at U.M., study every week, classes all semester. Maybe three or four lecturers all semester.

I am used to asking questions of lecturers. In Australia, it's fine. Here, it's different. Most people in class are extremely quiet and I'm often seen as disrespectful to the lecturers.

If students could equate the various new learning demands they encountered with gaining 'international exposure', they took a generally positive view of them since these challenges provided an opportunity for self transformation:

When I first came here, start of 2002, I felt totally alone. In class, I don't feel part of the culture. I understand. I have to make up for it. At first I can't, but then I change myself.

Some of my lecturers are from the Middle East, and some are local. It brings a variation of teaching from different cultures and different sorts of personalities. Sometimes, I have trouble with accents, but this is the education that I want. I want international educators and to be exposed to international ways of thinking so that I can develop an international perspective.

Sometimes, it is very hard, the teachings, the assessment, cramming, other students, very different, but I do not mind. If I want to develop myself, I have to be exposed.

Students tended to monitor the personal evolutions achieved from exposure to new learning demands as typified by this comment by a second-year undergraduate student: "The last two years have been a very good experience. The education has been very hard at times, very challenging, but also very good. When I compare myself with when I first came here, there's a whole lot of difference".

Students generally reserved their most emphatic criticisms for aspects of their education that they felt were *not sufficiently international* in scope. For example, there were some who objected to being taught by 'local' lecturers and tutors, on the grounds that these lecturers were not 'international'. There was even a complaint made against a lecturer for including 'local examples' in course material.

5.4.3 Managing Study

A range of responses was provided to questions about managing study in relation to other activities and commitments, with some students aiming to achieve a balance between study and

social activities; others prioritising study and still others prioritising non-study activities such as religion or sport. Students typically described their approaches to managing their studies in the transnational program was in contrast to their previous experiences:

If I was studying in Sri Lanka I'd spend more time studying and staying at home ... here I make time for friends.

In Brunei I would spend more time with my family, most likely. My nights would probably be for socialising but during the day it would be between my studies and my family.

In Bangladesh, parents and friends were there, car and stuff, maybe not study much. Here I have to be more independent. I do everything on my own, so I am more organised.

Many of the non-Malaysian students responded to this question by addressing the development of the 'international person'. The prerequisite to managing studies was to forge membership in the international community of students at the campus:

To manage your studies at a foreign university you have to become open-minded. You cannot be narrow minded, because your culture is different from other people's culture. The food is different, and sometimes other people try to offer us food, so you should go there, try it, enjoy with them, and sometimes the way they think is also different ... Let's say, people are from another religion. They tend to do things that you haven't seen before. Ok, I've never seen black people praying for five times. It's kind of a very beautiful thing. It's different, yet wonderful.

This case study suggests that new combinations of students are being engaged by offshore education. These seem to be students with a particular disposition towards global mobility. The findings also showed how modes of delivery associated with offshore provision may be capable of producing new affiliations and new forms of exclusion and inclusion for students.

Students in the study represented education at the campus as a range of novel experiences, for example, students typically described their approaches to managing study at the offshore campus by drawing a contrast with their previous lives. New experiences suggest new roles, new identities and ultimately new kinds of students. Students in the study typically accommodated, and even welcomed novel educational experiences, provided they were seen to be advancing the desired metamorphosis in identity and perspective. Many of the students at the Malaysian campus determined the worth of their on-going educational experiences through the lens of their pursuit of an international identity. There may be something new for Australian higher education in this orientation. There is certainly a challenge implied for Australian universities seeking to achieve quality in offshore provision. Is enough being done to provide offshore students with international exposure?

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, case study findings from an investigation of student experience at an Australian university's offshore campus in Malaysia were used to support the development of an argument that the recent, unparalleled growth in offshore education is establishing new kinds of students in Australian higher education. In the context of the goal of ensuring quality in offshore education, this is a significant claim because the satisfaction of the desires of 'customers' requires knowledge about the clientele. The Malaysian study indicates that for some offshore students, at least, there are new educational imperatives. Another important implication from this discussion is that education is expressed differently to different populations of offshore students. What is

often referred to as ‘offshore provision’ is in actuality an array of evolving practices. For quality purposes, it is clearly important to be aware that different models of implementation may exert their own individual influences on student experience.

6 CROSS-CASE FINDINGS

The three case studies reported in the preceding chapters were based on a central research question: “What are students’ perspectives of their experiences of education delivered ‘offshore’ by an Australian universities?” Each case highlights a key theme particular to the students’ experiences of their particular educational program and to the formation of their identities as students. For students in the Singapore case, culture shock emerged as a common phenomenon of student experience. The experiences of students in the Hong Kong case were characterised by a series of dilemmas about the formation of their identities as students. In the case of Malaysia, students encountered novel educational experiences, leading to the formation of new identities.

The findings draw attention to the diversity of the offshore educational environment and to the differences in students’ experiences across different contexts and different modes of program delivery. These findings support the view that closer investigation of the differences among ‘Asian’ international students in Western universities is necessary (Ackers, 1997). Despite the differences in emerging case study themes, however, there are commonalities in students’ perspectives on their experiences that are consistent across all cases. This chapter presents these commonalities as three interrelated propositions, as follows:

- Offshore students consider international education to be part of a long-term trajectory of identity formation, with the choice of program delivery being a strategy to progress along the trajectory.
- Offshore students seek identity as members of the educational community through pursuing local ways of belonging.
- Offshore students deal with the demands of family, work and study by prioritising and compartmentalising roles and activities.

6.1 *Proposition 1*

The starting point for the development of the first proposition resides in the reasons students gave for choosing to enrol in their chosen program. Clearly, many different factors impact on an individual’s choice in this regard, including cost, timetable of units, style of delivery, reputation of the university and nature of the assessment tasks. The individual cases explore these factors in some depth. In all cases, however, the vast majority of students chose their programs primarily because they were international and would therefore contribute to the construction of an ‘international person’. Different students had different meanings for the term ‘international’. It was variously considered that an international education signified quality and status, would provide international exposure and outlook, was an investment in career advancement and a means of personal growth and development. Students established their goals for educational, professional and personal success accordingly. Choosing an offshore model of education was a deliberate, informed strategy to achieve their goals and progress along the desired trajectory.

Of the range of meanings ascribed to the term ‘international’, foremost was the shared belief that an international education would be of high quality. In particular, it was assumed that the quality of teaching in an international program would be higher than in a local one. These expectations are in keeping with those of overseas students pursuing an international education in Australia (Aspland and O’Donoghue, 1994). Harris (1997) has noted, however, that overseas students’ expectations about the quality of teaching, supervision and institutional care of students can be unrealistic. There is no reason to assume that this is any less so for offshore students who are likely to be unfamiliar with the educational practices of their new university. The expectations of the case study participants about the quality of their programs were a benchmark against which to measure their experiences. Expectations are a critical part of, rather than a precursor to, a long term learning trajectory. If universities are to attain a ‘goodness of fit’ between the needs of their

offshore students and the resources of the university, student expectations about quality need to be taken into account.

In all three case studies, the majority of participants were attracted to being an international student because this provided them with both the knowledge base and opportunity to aid the process of constructing an international identity. This identity is a prospective one, to be developed throughout the learning experience. Choosing an international program is a critical first step in this development. The common view was that the international exposure provided by the program would, in turn, lead to an international outlook. The shared quest for an international outlook is evidenced by the main reasons cited for choosing an international course: anticipated opportunities to acquire international perspectives on the theories and practices of one's profession; to engage in academic exchange with Western lecturers; to have the freedom to voice opinions; and to experience 'foreign' curricula and teaching styles. The perceived importance to students of these aspects of a quality international education is reflected in the following comments:

I like being able to keep abreast of international perspectives. (Singapore)

I want to change myself ... international students, international curriculum and international teachers mean I can progress. (Malaysia)

I want to be an international person, not only a Chinese person. (Malaysia)

It is good to be aware of the current issues and reforms which are needed in the profession of teaching. (Hong Kong)

Status emerged as a common theme for the case study participants. A quality international education was typically regarded as a means to secure status, through professional and personal development. However, there was a wide range of views across cases, and among students within each case, about the kind of status afforded by being an international student, how that status might be realised, and the degree of importance it held for the individual. For example, a large cohort of students from the Malaysian case agreed that a Western education would enhance their standing in the general community. One respondent who held this view recognised it as "vain". Several others did not regard this kind of status as being at all influential in their choice of course. For most of the Singapore masters and Hong Kong doctoral participants, being a postgraduate student further enhanced the status ascribed to being an international student. At the same time, it contributed to their professional identity, for most, as educators. Comments such as "at this level of study" and "being a doctoral student" were often used to justify students' viewpoints on their experiences. Nevertheless, there was quite a difference in perspectives on how important status was in choosing the program, as the following indicate:

It will give me recognition of the degree by people around the world. (Hong Kong)

Higher social status locally is not very important to me in my life, but can be handy and useful at work, particularly when you're working in academia. (Hong Kong)

The program will give me higher status at work. (Singapore)

[Status is] not that important in choosing the program. (Singapore)

Participants from all three cases typically regarded international education as an investment in both career advancement and in life-long personal development. Most stated that they valued international education as an important investment in securing qualifications that could be used

overseas. The Chinese concept of 'face', or gaining prestige, was also an important factor in students' motivation to gain an international qualification. There was a high degree of consensus that success in the chosen program would enhance their self-esteem and social standing. Research shows that 'face' is a strong incentive for Asian students to work hard and succeed, and that poorer than expected outcomes could lead to 'loss of face' in the home country (Elsey, 1990). For example, Barker's (1997) investigation of the extent to which 'face' is a motivating factor for overseas students found that the students are driven, at least in part, by 'loss of face', together with other family, social and financial pressures and obligations. O'Donoghue (1996) found that, for Malaysian Chinese students studying in Australia, success in gaining overseas qualifications would enhance their self-esteem, reputation, dignity, status and that of their families. This was also the case for participants of the current study.

Personal growth and development were significant educational goals for the vast majority of participants. In the Hong Kong case, for example, students generally cited "self-fulfilment", "self-development" and "giving meaning to my life" as major reasons for engaging in higher degree studies. However, one Hong Kong student explained that these were Chinese values, which were complex and too difficult to explain to someone "from outside". She went on to say that she has reached a stage in her life where she has time to spend on her own "self-development". The following comments, from all three cases, are representative of the common views:

[The course is] important for self-improvement and enrichment and for life-long learning. (Singapore)

I want to change myself. I want my personality, my character, to build. (Malaysia)

80% is my self-fulfilment and 20% might be to try to guarantee I could be more employable when there is a budget cut. (Hong Kong)

These innate, personal values were a driving force for most students in choosing and persisting with their particular program of study. Self-development was discussed in terms of the individual and their role in the contexts of education, work and the broader community. There was a shared awareness among participants that their identities would change over time, and that personal growth was a significant and desirable aspect of that change. Moreover, it seems that students clearly felt that in making informed decisions about their educational choices and pathways, they were taking control over the shaping of their future identities. Dunn (cited in Parmenter et al., 2000) has explained this perspective as follows: "Understanding how identity is constructed is ... no longer solely a matter of the influences of history, culture, geography, and power but depends also on choices and constraints immediately available to individuals who as actors negotiate their lives within a broad field of social meanings and actions and within a range of institutional settings" (2000, p. 9).

At a more pragmatic level, students associated offshore international courses with the convenient scheduling of classes that enabled them to support work and family commitments while studying. Burns (1991), Kember and Gow (1991) and Niles (1995) identified an association between family and group pressure and the adoption of particular approaches to learning. Students in the Hong Kong and Singapore programs, which were delivered as a series of compressed units, typically sought this mode of study as a way of organising their lives. In other words, in seeking to study as international students they were not obviously succumbing to external pressures, but acting as rational and strategic decision makers by choosing an offshore program. For students at the Malaysian campus, global mobility and easy access to home were more important factors in university choice. Choosing to study at an 'offshore' local campus of an Australian university allowed students to locate themselves within both the international education and local community contexts. For participants in all three cases, confidence in their identity as successful

students and, for some, employed professionals appears to have enabled them to deploy offshore education as a means to quality international education while addressing obligations they prioritised. They thus negotiated their progression towards the construction of what they perceived to be an international identity.

The proposition that international education is a means to identity formation fits closely with the notion of quality as transformation. Caul explains that higher education can “literally transform self-image; equip the individual with more skills; build on the basis of the knowledge that the individual had before arrival; change attitudes and assumptions” (1993, p. 597). According to Tam “quality as transformation implies a change in all students in all aspects as a result of the higher education they receive” (2001, p. 51).

6.2 *Proposition 2*

The transformation of self-image described in the first proposition, above, involves membership of an educational community. The second proposition is that offshore students seek identity as members of the educational community through pursuing local ways of belonging. This proposition was developed from the consistently emerging themes of community, belonging and ‘fitting in’ across the three cases. The social practices of the particular model of offshore teaching and learning typically required some adjustment by students for them to develop a sense of belonging. The individual case studies describe the particularities of these issues for each group. However, participants in all three cases clearly recognised a trade-off between their choice of program delivery and ease of access to membership of the learning community. The prevailing view was that distance from the provider university invariably made it difficult for offshore students to experience an immediate sense of belonging to the broader university learning community. Membership of the local, classroom community was a means to overcome this dilemma. It was perceived as part of the trajectory towards the transformation of self-image.

The desire to ‘fit in’ emerged as a significant theme in all case studies. The majority of students in the Malaysian and Singaporean cases expressed the view that the diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds of their student cohort sometimes made it difficult to do so. This is not surprising in the Malaysian case, where students came from backgrounds including China, Korea, Sri Lanka, India, Africa, Brunei and Malaysia to study at one campus. One student explained that the differences in cultural backgrounds “took time to get used to”. Participants generally felt that they ‘fitted in’ most easily with classmates of similar cultural and, notably, language backgrounds, and only secondarily with the broader classroom cohort. Similar feelings were expressed by participants in the Singapore case, where a broad ethnic diversity exists in the local population.

There was ample evidence, however, that participants in all cases highly valued the experience of mixing with people from other cultural groups. Some stated, for example, that they could “pick up” new languages, make new and different kinds of friends, and become more “open-minded”. In this way, their experiences were contributing to the formation of their identity as an international person. International exposure was gleaned through membership of the new ‘offshore’ learning community, as well as through engagement with the curriculum.

Another factor that emerged as influential in ‘fitting in’ was the arrangement of student intakes where, although students were in the same class, undertaking the same unit, they may have commenced their program at different times. This was the model in place in both the Singaporean and Malaysian cases. In Singapore, students identified with their enrolling cohort of peers. Similarly, in Malaysia, students sought membership with their “batches”. For all students in these two case studies, ‘fitting in’ with their classmates from other intakes was a pronounced issue.

When asked to describe how these difficulties were overcome in the social practices of the classroom, many participants pointed to the role of the lecturers in fostering a sense of

community through engaging students in whole class discussions. This resonates with the view of Clark and Clark (2000, p. 6), who maintain that the “real strength of intensive teaching is that students get to know each other well” and that educators should utilise “a number of introduction exercises” to develop relationships of trust conducive to an effective learning experience. Participants in all three cases generally agreed that the pedagogical strategies of small group discussions and workshops served to develop a sense of belonging and community.

However, some students took the view that lecturers’ requests for personal and professional disclosures were threatening and made them feel uncomfortable. Students in the Singaporean case, for example, disliked being asked to talk about themselves in front of others. Similarly in Hong Kong, participants were reluctant to disclose information about their work or their academic assignments in class. This was attributed by one Hong Kong participant to a “Chinese learning style”. Here a dilemma was apparent; collaborative learning was generally perceived as a means to membership of the local learning community, but unfamiliarity with this learning style sometimes made it difficult to participate.

Despite these particularities, there was a commonality across all three case studies that students enjoyed the collaborative, small group work approaches to classroom learning that were in place in all of their programs. Participants viewed these as “good practice” strategies that brought together the smaller groups of students with similar cultural and ethnic backgrounds, or in the same intake, and contributed to the overall quality of their learning experiences. Earlier research has also identified a preference by Asian students for co-operative learning strategies (Gatfield and Gatfield, 1994; Biggs, 1996). There was, however, a general acknowledgment by the case study participants that cultural learning style differences and preferences do need to be recognised by lecturers. In all of the case studies, participants agreed that the overall quality of their experiences were enhanced by encountering new and different teaching and learning approaches.

Renshaw describes how membership of a learning community is managed over time, though negotiating inclusion and exclusion and reconciling of diversity and uniformity: “Where the members of a community are in complete agreement ... there is a reduced potential for insights that arise from different perspectives. The emphasis on unspoken consensus suggests a movement from diversity to uniformity. It can be argued, however, that coming together around goals, beliefs, strategies and activities in the classroom is a necessary condition for the recognition of difference and the exploration of diverse viewpoints” (2003, p. 366).

There is evidence that, for overseas students in higher education, satisfaction with quality of life correlates positively with their evaluation of course quality (Harris, 1997). For participants in the three case studies, the quality of the learning experience was significantly enhanced when they felt a sense of belonging to the learning community. Harris (1997) argues that advanced preparation can help students adapt to the life and culture of the host country, which in turn may increase their academic satisfaction. Furnham (1997) agrees, purporting that orientation programs are necessary for people moving to a culturally new and different environment. The findings of the research reported here suggest that students studying offshore with Australian universities also experience problems in the new and different educational environment.

In Furnham’s view, however, the effectiveness of orientation programs for overseas students are limited for several reasons: the information they provide is too general to have specific application; they emphasise novel cultural aspects while ignoring the mundane; they overlook hidden cultural agendas; and their recommendations do not necessarily lead to action, or to appropriate action. He concludes that, to be successful, a “cultural educator” must be a mediator, someone who is intimately familiar with both cultures and able to represent each culture to the other. It is reasonable to suggest that in order to provide a good and successful learning experience for their students, academics teaching in offshore courses need to develop these cultural capabilities.

There is a prevailing view that if educational institutions are to succeed and, indeed, survive, they need to be client centered. The literature on the welfare of overseas students is instructive in this regard. This involves recognising learners as individuals with diverse needs and expectations, and not an homogenous population. There is a pool evidence to support this; such as Williams and Mills, 1995; Wright, 1997; Barker, 1997. Certainly, the participants in these cases did not experience their classmates as an homogenous group. However, this influenced the extent to which they felt that they ‘fitted in’ with the learning community of the classroom. The findings suggest that the quality of the overall learning experience of students engaged in offshore education is enhanced by a sense of belonging to the learning community. Further research may cast light on the degree to which social factors impact on belonging and alienation in different models of offshore delivery.

6.3 *Proposition 3*

The third proposition is that offshore students deal with the demands of family, work and study by prioritising and compartmentalising roles and activities. They often do not meet all the requirements of study program as a result. This is underpinned by the view that the offshore learning experience is best understood in relation to the social situations in which it occurs. For the majority of case study students, participating in an offshore program meant that they had to cope with the requirements of work and family, as well as study. This meant that students took up different roles at different times and had to find ways to cope with what were often competing demands on their time.

Juggling work, study and family required extremely good organisational skills. A key strategy was to prioritise the roles pertaining to each, and the associated tasks. There was very little overlap in work, family and study roles. In Hong Kong and Singapore, participants fell into two roughly equal categories on the basis of how they prioritised these commitments. There were those who said that family took priority over work and study. These were mostly, but not exclusively, women. For the other group, work commitments took priority over study and family activities. One Hong Kong student explained, “obviously work is top priority because study is supposed to supplement or reinforce work.” For both groups, the demands of work and family were met before those related to study. In the case of Malaysia, where many of the students were not ‘local’, the priorities tended to be a mix of study and social activities. Several students pointed out that, had they been “at home”, their priorities would have been different.

A major theme that emerged was the lack of time to fully engage with the course. The demands of the various aspects of the students’ lives often meant that completing set work on time was difficult. In their recent case studies Australian courses delivered in Hong Kong, Evans and Tregenza (2002) also found that family commitments and long working hours made study difficult. In the Hong Kong and Singapore case studies reported here, participants typically mentioned the difficulty of finding time to do readings, either before or after the course delivery. Some participants in these two cases managed to find time to work on assignments in the office, but most found it necessary to study either in their office outside of work hours or at home in the evenings. On the whole, the Hong Kong and Singapore participants did not study during work hours, and tried to isolate a specific time period for studying, such as before they went home for the day, or even while travelling to and from work. They hoped to “catch up” on the readings after the lectures, but work and other demands very often meant that this just did not happen. A common strategy was to compartmentalise tasks. Students explained this approach as follows:

I use every single one of my long weekends, annual leave and casual leave and group them together and I try to get away from this place for two weeks or three weeks and then I stay just like a student, to catch up. I just couldn't manage to be too concentrated on all sorts of work. (Hong Kong)

I do my assignments at home when the children are all asleep. I work until maybe two in the morning yeah, but sometimes I just have to sit down and explain to them look, I have to finish an assignment and please do not disturb Mummy. Sometimes my sister helps me by taking out the children so I can concentrate on what I am doing. (Singapore)

Participants in the case of Malaysia also adopted the strategy of compartmentalising aspects of their lives in order to manage their studies. The key issue that emerged for these students in this regard was the need to “be organised”.

In all three cases, it emerged that reading was the study task that suffered the most due to lack of time. In Hong Kong and Singapore, even though students knew well in advance when units would be delivered, and tried to plan their time accordingly, most acknowledged that they often did not do the required preparatory readings and did not put as much time as they would like into their studies. In these cases, it appears that the avoidance of pre-reading was a strategy to enable more time for family and work. In the Malaysian case, it allowed more time for sport, religion and socialising. Across all cases, the decision not to engage fully with the readings was an outcome of a prior prioritisation of roles.

Across all of the case studies, the social practices involved what is arguably a shift in focus from the intrinsic worth and value of the course to more extrinsic elements of the program. For example, students attached more importance to turning up for classes than to reading course materials. The majority of participants viewed classroom instruction in terms of a course overview and chose to interpret ‘essential readings’ as source material for assignments. This does, however, highlight their identities as independent learners. This impression is reinforced by student appreciation of and adaptability to different classroom teaching styles and international curricula and by the commonly expressed desire to engage in academic exchange with Western lecturers, described in the individual case studies.

Problems of ‘adjustment’ have been identified as a major issue for students studying in universities outside their home country. These problems include differences in approaches to teaching and learning, feelings of isolation, inadequate language skills, and stress brought on by these problems (Ballard, 1987; Ballard and Clanchy, 1997; Ryan and Hellmundt, 2003). The case study findings reported here show that similar problems exist for offshore students who encounter new educational environments in their home country. In the Singapore case study, it was argued that students engaged in offshore education may experience culture shock as an effect of the mode of delivery. In the Hong Kong case, it was found that student experiences were characterised by a series of dilemmas about the formation of their identity as offshore students. In all of the case studies, students expected to, and did, learn to adapt to the offshore learning context. For those in their home country, there were particular dilemmas, described above and in detail in the individual case studies. According to Kelly and Ha: “While there may be an argument for expecting Asian students studying in Australia to learn to adapt to the prevailing cultural and educational norms, the same expectation does not necessarily apply when they are studying in their own countries where they are clearly embedded in their own language, family, work, peer and social groups” (1998, p. 27).

The literature on the welfare of overseas students is instructive here. For example, Mangubhai and Stewart (1993) investigated the expectations of overseas students and their reasons for coming to Australia to study. They concluded that a quality education for overseas students must include a “complete customer service” comprising both academic and personal welfare. This is in line with the idea that institutions of higher education are founded on “processes of causing growth and development of students in a holistic sense, incorporating not just intellectual growth but social, emotional and cultural development as well” (Tam, 2001, p. 51). It seems that the identity of the offshore student involves reconciling and negotiating the various social roles in which the learner is simultaneously engaged. Providing a total quality experience for offshore

students involves taking account of the broader social contexts, roles and demands of students' everyday lives.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has drawn attention to dimensions of the offshore experience from the perspectives of students in Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong studying for a degree delivered by an Australian university. The findings of a cross-case analysis highlight some of the complexities surrounding the social practices involved in being an offshore university student, and the ways in which these practices contribute to the formation of student identity. Three interrelated propositions were developed from the cross-case findings. The propositions developed here give insights into students' perspectives on what makes a quality experience for offshore learners. Further case study research is now necessary to expand this theoretical picture.

7 CONCLUSION

The propositions presented in this paper have implications for understanding what makes a good and successful educational experience and therefore for quality enhancement in international, offshore, higher education. This chapter will discuss these implications and provide some suggestions for action.

The proposition that offshore students consider international education to be part of a long-term trajectory of identity formation, with the choice of program being a strategy to progress along the trajectory, has important quality implications for Australian universities. Encouraging students to develop an international outlook is regarded as a quality objective in Australian higher education. It is associated with the transformative quality objective of student empowerment and student enhancement. The ‘internationalising’ of an Australian curriculum by incorporating content germane to the country where the program will be taught may not be of much use in facilitating the development of an international outlook, in constructing an international identity, or in meeting the needs of the students. If satisfaction for the customer is the mark of quality in provision, then, as the research has shown, ‘local’ content additions do not fully address the desire of offshore students for exposure to international ways of thinking and practice. Since students in the case studies saw communication with ‘international’ lecturers as important to their own personal development, it is possible too that the practice of using ‘local’ staff to augment teaching by academics visiting from Australian universities may also suffer limitations in terms of the transformative quality objective. It follows, that academics from Australian universities need to be well equipped for their roles as agents of internationalisation. It follows that student and graduate feedback mechanisms need to provide opportunities for comment and evaluation on these matters.

The proposition that students seek identity as members of the educational community through pursuing local ways of belonging has implications for teaching/learning practices transnationally. A finding of the case study research was that some approaches to teaching/learning that are identified in Australian higher education quality models as ‘best practice’ simply do not translate well overseas. For example, supplying students with pre-readings before class instruction and using class time to explore curriculum content in detail may be sound teaching/learning strategies within the borders of the Australian-based university campus, but they did not emerge as very effective strategies in the case studies. As another example of the ineffectiveness of some exported models, it was noted in the Singapore study that the ‘real life’, problem-solving approach valued in Australian pedagogy caused anxieties for some students. The best illustration of this matter is possibly the declaration of “no weaknesses, only strengths” offered in response to a lecturer’s request to a student to indicate how she would cope with a particular problem if it emerged in her workplace.

Creating trust, partly through sharing information on identity, is regarded as a sign of best practice in Australian university classrooms. However, the case study research revealed that requests for public disclosure, even on matters such as the nature of one’s employment, cause some students to invent analogies or to take other steps to conceal identity. In short, such requests sometimes made students feel “uncomfortable”. In part, this appears to be a consequence of drawing students from different backgrounds anonymously together. The implication is that to improve their teaching/learning practices overseas, Australian universities need to develop their best practice models for offshore education *from* offshore education.

A further implication is that cross-cultural training that always focuses on the customs and mores of the country in which a program is located may not ‘acclimatise’ academics from Australian universities to the *mix* of beliefs, values, backgrounds and orientations they are likely to encounter. Educational quality will benefit from cross-cultural training that is student-specific as

well as site-specific. Related to this matter is the issue of cross-cultural training for students who engage in offshore education. It is not only the visiting academic from an Australian university who enters a foreign cultural milieu. Many of the students who engage in offshore education are also visitors with 'foreign' learning histories and 'foreign' cultural and educational orientations. It is suggested that Australian universities need to develop ways to culturally acclimatise students of offshore education. There needs to be more awareness of the social adjustments offshore education demands of students. Perhaps relevant cross-cultural training could begin while students are 'settling in'. Possibly, the matter could be addressed, at least initially, in orientation sessions. More attention is also required by universities on how to sustain what may be regarded as universally applicable models of best practice. For example, how does an academic become reflexive about the craft of teaching in an offshore program?

Massy and French (2001) point out that quality assurance is not just about the detection of defects, but is also about prevention. The findings of the case study research into two twinning programs and an offshore campus indicate the importance of provider universities being fully aware of how the particular varieties of the models they employ may contribute to or constrain educational quality. Without an understanding of how the modes of offshore delivery used impact on student experience, it is not possible to address adequately the objective of providing education of comparable quality offshore and onshore. It is suggested that universities ensure they have mechanisms to allow them to look holistically at the modes of offshore program delivery their various schools and faculties are employing or planning to employ. This provides a basis for quality control. Further to this, it is suggested that universities build in processes to ensure that they have sound knowledge on how their modes of delivery impact on the quality of their offshore provision. One means of doing this is to incorporate into student feedback mechanisms, investigations of the relationship between mode of delivery and student experiences of a program.

The proposition that offshore students deal with the demands of family, work and study by prioritising and compartmentalising roles and activities is important to quality considerations because it draws attention to the nature of offshore study and to its context. The 'onshore/offshore' division of international students can mask some very important differences that can have consequences for quality. Offshore international students who are in their home countries are more likely to be working while studying and more likely to have daily commitments to family than are international students studying within Australia. The case study research indicated that these commitments, and not study, are the recognised priorities for many of these students and that education has to be 'fitted in'. This has implications for teaching/learning because of the kinds of strategies it may incline students towards. Students may 'choose' a program because the mode of delivery suits their priorities. They may choose to enter classes without examining course material. They may place a high priority on passing, rather than on learning. They may seek a very procedural approach from lecturers, wanting synopses, hand-outs and point-by-point notes to copy, not because of some inclination to rote learning, but because of the need to amass material able to be used at a later time for assignment and comprehension purposes. Some students may experience anxiety about the need to relegate their education to second or third place among their commitments, and this may show in their relations with classroom peers and with lecturers. There may be a resultant mismatch between lecturer and student expectations.

Harvey (cited in Leckey and Neill, 2001) observes that quality assurance processes must allow students to raise issues that are important to them and must also establish what is important to students as well as what is satisfactory. The standard quantitative feedback mechanisms, notably the questionnaires that seek to establish student satisfaction, do not necessarily accomplish this. Qualitative approaches that focus on student perspectives are one of the best, if not the best, means of finding out what is important to students, and therefore, an excellent means of addressing quality considerations in offshore, international higher education.

8 REFERENCES

- Ackers, J. (1997) Evaluating courses: The perspective of the overseas student. In *Overseas Students in Higher Education. Issues in Teaching and Learning*, D. McNamara and R. Harris (Eds.). Routledge. London.
- Asmar, C. (1999) Scholarship, experience, or both? A developer's approach to cross-cultural teaching. *International Journal of Academic Development*, **4(1)**, 18-27.
- Aspland, T. and O'Donoghue, T. (1994) Quality in supervising overseas students? In *Quality in Postgraduate Education*, O. Zuber-Skerritt & Y. Ryan (Eds.). Kogan Page. London.
- Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (1998) *Australian Universities' Offshore Programs*. Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee. Canberra.
- Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (1999) *Australian Universities, International Universities*. Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee. Canberra.
- Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (2002) *Code of Ethical Practice in the Provision of Education for International Students by Australian Universities*. Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee. Canberra.
- Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (2003) *Offshore Programs of Australian Universities*. Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee. Canberra.
- Ballard, B. (1987) Academic adjustment: The other side of the export dollar. *Higher Education Research and Development*, **6(2)**, 109-119.
- Ballard, B. and Clanchy, J. (1991) *Teaching Students from Overseas: A Brief Guide for Lecturers and Supervisors*. Longman Cheshire. Melbourne.
- Ballard, B. and Clanchy, J. (1997) *Teaching International Students*. IDP Education Australia. Deakin, ACT.
- Barker, J. (1997) The purposes of study, attitudes to study and staff-student relationships. In *Overseas Students in Higher Education. Issues in Teaching and Learning*, D. McNamara and R. Harris (Eds.). Routledge. London.
- Beasley, C & Pearson, C. (1996) Facilitating the learning of international students: A collaborative approach. *Higher Education Research and Development*, **19**, 1-10.
- Biggs J. B. (1990) Asian students' approaches to learning: Implications for teaching and learning, *Paper presented at the 8th Australasian Tertiary Learning Skills and Language Conference*. Queensland University of Technology.
- Biggs, J.B. (1996) Western misconceptions of the confucian-heritage learning culture. In *The Chinese Learner: Cultural, Psychological and Contextual Influences*, D.A. Watkins and J.B. Biggs (Eds.). CERC and ACER. Hong Kong.
- Biggs, J.B. (1999) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*. The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press. Buckingham.

- Burns, R. B. (1991) Study and stress among first year overseas students in an Australian university. *Higher Education Research and Development*, **10(1)**, 61-77.
- Carroll, J. (2002) *A Handbook for Deterring Plagiarism in Higher Education*. Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development. Oxford.
- Caul, B. (1993) *Value-Added: The Personal Development of Students in Higher Education*. December Publications. Belfast.
- Chalmers, D. and Volet, S. (1997) Common misconceptions about students from South-East Asia studying in Australia. *Higher Education Research and Development*, **16(1)**, 87-98.
- Chapman, A. and Pyvis, D. (2005) Identity and social practice in higher education: Student experiences of postgraduate courses delivered 'offshore' in Singapore and Hong Kong by an Australian university. *International Journal of Educational Development*, **25(1)**, 39-52.
- Clark, E. and Clark, P. (2000) Taking the educational show on the road: The promises and pitfalls of intensive teaching in off-shore post graduate coursework. *International Education – ej* **4(1)**, 1-13.
- Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies (1998) *Guidelines: Professional Doctorates*. Unpublished paper prepared for the Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies by T. Evans, A. Fisher & W. Gritchling.
- Cox, L., Logan, P., & Cobbin, D. (2002) Offshore/onshore programs: Student perspectives. *Paper delivered at the 16th IDP Australian International Education Conference*. Hobart.
- Crew, V. and Bodycott, P. (2001) "Why does she call me 'Darling' "? – Culture and affect in overseas language immersion programs. In *Subject Teaching and Teacher Education in the New Century: Research and Innovation*, Y.C. Cheng and K.W. Tsui (Eds.). HKIED Publications. Dordrecht, The Netherlands.
- De Vita, G. (2001) Learning styles, culture and inclusive instruction in the multicultural classroom: A business and management perspective. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, **(38)2**, 165-173.
- Debowski, S. (2003) Lost in internationalised space: The challenge of sustaining academics teaching offshore. *Paper presented at the 17th Australian International Education Conference*. Melbourne
- Department of Education, Science & Training (2004) *\$1.5 Million for Universities' Offshore Quality Assurance*. Media Release 10/06/04.
- Ellis, R. (1993) *Quality Assurance for University Teaching*. Open University Press. Buckingham.
- Elsley, B. (1990) Teaching and learning. In *The Learning Experience of Overseas Students*, M. Kinnell (Ed.). SRHE and Open University Press. Buckingham.
- Erickson, F. & Schultz, J. (1992) Students' experience of the curriculum. In *Handbook of Research on the Curriculum*, P.W. Jackson (Ed.). Macmillan. New York.
- Evans, T. and Tregenza, K. (2002) Academics' experiences of teaching Australian 'non-local' courses in Hong Kong. *Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education Conference*. Brisbane.

Furnham, A. (1997) The experience of being an overseas student. In *Overseas Students in Higher Education. Issues in Teaching and Learning*, D. McNamara and R. Harris (Eds.). Routledge. London.

Gatfield, T. and Gatfield, R. (1994) The Asian and the Australian student higher education learning process: Is there a need to modify the Australian teaching methodologies to draw on the Asian learning process? An exploratory investigation. *Paper presented at the HERDSA Annual Conference, Higher Education in Transition*. Australian National University. Canberra.

Grossberg, L. (1992) *We gotta get out of this Place*. Routledge. New York.

Harris, R. (1997) Overseas students in the United Kingdom university system: A perspective from social work. In *Overseas Students in Higher Education. Issues in Teaching and Learning*, D. McNamara and R. Harris (Eds.). Routledge. London.

Hellmundt, S. (2001) The internationalisation of the tertiary curriculum: Strategies to link critical theory and intercultural understandings. *Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education Conference*. Fremantle, WA.

Hitchcock, G. and Hughes, D. (1993) Models of social research. In *Research and the Teacher: A Qualitative Introduction to School-based Research*, G. Hitchcock and D. Hughes (Eds.). Routledge. London.

IDP (2000) Transnational education providers, partners and policy: *Challenges for Australian Institutions Offshore*, D. Davis, A. Olsen and A. Bohm (Eds.). IPD Education Australia.

IDP (2002) *International Students Enrolled in Australian Universities, 1994-2002*. IDP Education Australia, Canberra.

IDP (2003) *International Students in Australian Universities*. IDP Education Australia, Canberra.

IDP and the Centre for International Economics (2002) *Global Student Mobility 2025*. IDP Education Australia, Canberra.

Kelly, M.E. and Ha, T.S. (1998) Borderless education and teaching and learning cultures: The case of Hong Kong. *Australian Universities' Review*, **1**, 26-33.

Kember, D. and Gow, L. (1991) A challenge to the anecdotal stereotype of the Asian student. *Studies in Higher Education*, **16(2)**, 117-128.

Knight, J. (2003) *Internationalization of Higher Education Practices and Priorities: 2003 IAU Survey Report*. International Association of Universities. Paris.

Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.

Leckey, J., and Neill, N. (2001) Qualifying quality: The importance of student feedback. *Quality in Higher Education*, **7(1)**, 19-32.

Lomas, L. (2001) Does the development of mass education necessarily mean the end of quality? *Paper presented at the Sixth QHE Seminar, 'The End of Quality?', 25-26 May*. Birmingham.

Mangubhai, F. and Stewart, J. (1993) An exploration into the expectations of overseas students and their reasons for coming to Australia. *Paper presented at the 16th IDP Australian Education Conference*. Canberra.

- Massy, W. and French, N. (2001) Teaching and learning quality process review: What the programme has achieved in Hong Kong. *Quality in Higher Education*, **7(1)**, 33-45.
- Maxwell, T. W. & Shanahan, P. J. (2001) Professional doctoral education in Australia and New Zealand: Reviewing the scene. In *Doctoral Education and Professional Practice: The Next Generation?*, B. Green, T.W. Maxwell and P.J. Shanahan (Eds.). Kardoorair Press. Armidale, NSW.
- McWilliam, E., Taylor, P. G., Thomson, P., Green, B., Maxwell, T., Wildy, H. & Simons, D. (2002) *Research Training in Doctoral Programs: What can be Learned from Professional Doctorates?* Commonwealth Department of Education Science & Training. Canberra.
- Meares, D. (2003) Global student mobility 2025: The supply challenge-meeting and managing demand for international education. *Paper presented at the 17th IDP Australian International Education Conference*. Melbourne.
- Murray, D. (2003) New professionalism: Future directions for the international education profession in Australia. *Paper presented at the 17th IDP Australian International education Conference*. Melbourne.
- National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes (2000) Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.
- National Tertiary Education Union (2004) *Excess Baggage: Australian Staff Involvement in the Delivery of Offshore Courses*. National Tertiary Education Research Report, July 2004.
- Nelson, B. [Australian Government Minister for Education, Science and Training] (2004) Media Release, 25 June.
- Niles, S. (1995) Cultural differences in learning motivation and learning strategies: A comparison of overseas and Australian students at an Australian university. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, **19(3)**, 369-385.
- O'Donoghue, T. (1996) Malaysian Chinese students' perceptions of what is necessary for their academic success in Australia: A case study at one university. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, **20(2)**, 67-80.
- Oberg, K. (1960) Culture shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments. *Practical Anthropology*, **7**, 177-182.
- Parmenter, L., Lam, C., Seto, F. and Tomita, Y. (2000) Locating self in the world: Elementary school children in Japan, Macau and Hong Kong. *Compare*, **30(2)**, 133-144.
- Pederson, P. (1995) *The Five Stages of Culture Shock*. Greenwood. London.
- Phillips, D. J. (1990) Overseas students and their impact on the changing face of professional education in universities. *Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education Annual Conference*. The University of Sydney.
- Rambruth, P. & McCormick, J. (2001) Learning diversity in higher education: A comparative study of Asian international and Australian students. *Higher Education*, **42**, 333-350.
- Renshaw, P. (2003) Community and learning: Contradictions, dilemmas and prospects. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, **24(3)**, 355-370.

- Robertson, M. Line, M., Jones, S. and Thomas, S. (2000) International students, learning environments and perceptions: A case study using the Delphi technique. *Higher Education Research and Development*, **19(1)**, 89-102.
- Rowley, J. (1995) Student feedback: A shaky foundation for quality assurance. *Innovation and Learning in Education*, **1(3)**, 14-20.
- Ryan, J. (2002) University education for all? Teaching and learning practices for diverse groups of students. Unpublished doctoral thesis. University of Ballarat.
- Ryan, J. and Hellmundt, S. (2003) Excellence through diversity: Internationalisation of curriculum and pedagogy. *Paper presented at the 17th IDP International Education Conference*. Melbourne.
- Sachs, J. (2003) *The Activist Teaching Profession*. Open University Press. Buckingham.
- Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee (2001) *Universities in Crisis: Report into the Capacity of Public Universities to meet Australia's Higher Education Needs*. Australian Commonwealth. Canberra.
- Sinclair, A. and Britton Wilson, V. (1999) *The Culture-Inclusive Classroom*. The University of Melbourne. Melbourne.
- Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1990) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Sage. California.
- Tam, M. (2001) Measuring quality and performance in higher education. *Quality in Higher Education*, **7(1)**, 47-54.
- Tang, C. (1996) Collaborative learning: The latent dimension in Chinese students' learning. In *The Chinese Learner: Cultural, Psychological and Contextual Influences*, D.A Watkins and J.B. Biggs (Eds.). CERC and ACER. Hong Kong.
- Tootell, K. (1999) International students in Australia: What do we know of the quality of their education? *Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference*. Melbourne.
- United Kingdom Council for Graduate Education (2002) *Professional Doctorates*. Council for Graduate Education. Litchfield, UK.
- Vogt, F. (2002) Jet-setting postgrad: Ethnographic research in two countries. In *Doing a Doctoral Thesis in Educational Ethnography*, G. Walford (Ed.). Elsevier Science.
- Wenger, E. (1998) *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.
- Williams, L. and Mills, C. (1995) Serving international student markets: A challenge to educational management. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, **23(2)**, 343-51.
- Winter, R. (1982) Dilemma analysis: A contribution to methodology for action research. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, **12(3)**, 166-173.

Wright, C. (1997) Gender matters: Access, welfare, teaching and learning. In *Overseas Students in Higher Education. Issues in Teaching and Learning*, D. McNamara and R. Harris (Eds.). Routledge. London.

AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Dr David Pyvis
Department of Media and Information
Curtin University of Technology
Bentley
Western Australia 6845

Email: D.Pyvis@curtin.edu.au

Associate Professor Anne Chapman
Graduate School of Education
The University of Western Australia
Nedlands
Western Australia 6009

Email: anne.chapman@uwa.edu.au

