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# The internationalisation of vocational education and training




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# Executive summary

THIS REPORT PRESENTS a review and analysis of research on the internationalisation of vocational education and training (VET) and provides an assessment of other research that needs to be conducted in this area.

Globalisation is the integration of economies worldwide through trade, trade agreements, finance, information networks and the movement of people and knowledge between nations. Internationalisation represents those same activities occurring between two or more nation states but does not necessarily involve a whole-world view.

## Why should VET internationalise?

Several reasons are identifiable for the internationalisation of VET:

- Already VET institutions have had considerable success in the development of the inbound student market so that in 1997, 27.1 per cent of the 151 000 overseas students in Australia were enrolled in VET programs, and 20.1 per cent in English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) programs.
- VET has also had success in offering offshore training to individuals and enterprises and developing offshore campuses.
- Each State in Australia has developed an international marketing function for VET.
- There are clear commercial opportunities for VET internationally as well as the political benefits resulting from international involvement and engaging with other nations in the development of their VET functions.

Internationalisation is not just about offering services to people of other nations. It is also about ensuring that Australian VET students are given the

opportunity to learn and experience cross-national and cross-cultural understanding and skills to enable their effective participation in an increasingly globalised world. Opportunities for students and staff to develop international networks are also important.

## Can technology assist?

The use of modern interactive and non-interactive communications technologies to deliver VET services across distances and cultures is attractive and the technologies are increasingly available. There are major considerations associated with:

- the cultural imperialism that can attend the delivery of VET programs designed for one culture into another
- the need to ensure that VET programs available through technology are appropriate in terms of content and presentation
- the importance of providing local learner support techniques to attend technology-delivered programs

## Cultural differences

Cultures across the globe vary along a number of identifiable dimensions and, of course, different sets of beliefs and behaviours reside within specific cultures. An understanding of cultural variation is important for effective business and training relationship development. Cultural differences can be interpreted in the framework of one's own culture so that incorrect understanding occurs.



These cultural variations affect the way business is developed and is understood and, equally, affect the different ways in which people learn. Good client-focussed service and training delivery require an understanding of the culture to be worked in and this, in turn, requires prior research. While the development of industry training partnerships overseas appears to be based on much the same considerations as pertain in Australia, special care is necessary at the relationship building stage and in the specification of needs and service requirements. Patience in the development of those relationships is crucial to their success.

## Successfully working offshore

Working successfully offshore requires the establishment of relationships, but also requires considerable support from the home institution, and the selection of appropriate personnel. Staff working overseas need responsiveness from home, and clear policies associated with the standard of accommodation, quality and nature of medical assistance and health maintenance, and good communications. Development of appropriately designed training programs and learning materials is an important component of support.

## Staff development

The evidence is that staff development requires attention to understanding the particular culture that is to be visited, but also required is training in general cultural awareness. There are many roles played by personnel who support a VET provider's international program. These roles include strategic planning and market intelligence, business development, management, sales and marketing, training design and delivery, instructional design, finance staff and support staff. There are skills required for each of these roles, and each role has staff development requirements. The need for effective staff development is crucial to success. The evidence indicates that staff development is best affected through a range of scheduled programs and activities, experience, mentoring, and work-based learning. Staff development content and delivery for each of the roles requires planning and resource allocation.

## Internationalising Australian VET campuses

- Internationalising an institution and its campuses requires a 'whole of institute' approach to ensure that policies, procedures and services are part of the mainstream of activity.
- Clear and institution-wide planning processes are necessary, and attention has to be paid to student services, staff development, and the opportunities that can be given to Australian students of the institution.
- Processes for the enhancement of Australian student opportunity for international understanding and experience are in need of considerably more development.
- Specific requirements relate to internationalisation of curricula, and the availability for meaningful learning in an international environment.
- Student support services such as counselling and library also require careful planning to ensure satisfactory service to overseas students.

# Context

THE INTERNATIONALISATION AND globalisation of the world and the Australian economy has moved very quickly in the past ten or so years. We are now familiar with the development of multi-national organisations and we expect that this trend will continue. The movement is manifested at a commercial level by an increasing amount of foreign investment in Australia and an increasing amount of Australian investment overseas, along with a growing number of Australian enterprises developing overseas operations. Australia is convinced that future economic well-being will only result from competitive participation in the global economy. At a government level, internationalisation is exemplified in developments such as the European Union, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation.

Those developments at a government and a commercial level include vocational education and training (VET), with providers and VET authorities also convinced that the future includes commitment to internationalisation. Opportunities have already been seen by VET providers in their recruitment of inbound students, and in their willingness to seek commercial training opportunities offshore. Other nations in the world also see VET as part of their strategy towards economic development and that also provides opportunity for a well-developed VET system such as Australia's to participate at an international level.



As with any other sector of industry or government, for VET to participate successfully on an international level there is a need to position ourselves to do so. That means consideration has to be given to the products and services that can successfully compete on the world market; effective methods of marketing our wares; the strategic and operational management processes that are required; the preparation of staff for successful international work; and the needs of clients both offshore and those who come to Australia for training.

VET organisations have taken many initiatives, often with little knowledge to support them, and a vast range of experience has developed. Research has been conducted in Australia and overseas that assists with the decisions required to provide quality training services internationally, and many practitioners have written about their experiences.

In this volume, we bring together much of this research and reporting to focus on the issues confronting VET providers participating at an international level.

# Globalisation and internationalisation

GLOBALISATION INITIALLY INVOLVED recognition that the marketplace for goods and services was no longer the region, or nation, in which those products were manufactured, but that the entire globe was becoming the marketplace. Economic and business planning, therefore, had to expand the planning scope to capitalise on that much larger market. In order to affect that globalisation of production and trade, attention had to be paid to deregulating the trading restrictions that had developed between nations in an era of protectionism during the latter part of the 19th century and the first 70 years of the 20th century. Attention also had to be paid by participating enterprises to becoming globally competitive. This meant that goods and services had to compete with the best available globally, both in quality and price. No longer would poor quality goods, or high costs of production, be protected by tariff barriers and import restrictions. Nations and enterprises would need to succeed through effective competition on an international basis. The opening of national economies to world markets through the reform of tariffs is a key component of globalisation, as well as being a controversial one.



The term *globalisation* is one that we hear every day in contemporary Australian working life, and in the media, but it tends to have multiple meanings and multiple uses. Gollan (ed.) (1995) observed that *globalisation* encompasses a range of issues which 'are considered a foundation for our social and economic functioning as a modern developed state' (p.1). He usefully divides globalisation into economic, political and cultural factors. Economically, the process is characterised by capital accumulation across national borders and by planning economic activity at government and corporate level on an international basis. Politically, the process is characterised by political relationships and agreements that extend beyond the jurisdiction of any one political state; and, culturally, globalisation is characterised by the movement of people, information, and ideas across national borders. The International

Monetary Fund (IMF) (1997) defines *globalisation* as 'the integration of economies worldwide through trade, financial flows, technology spillovers, information networks and cross-cultural currents'. While both these conceptualisations of globalisation are useful, the IMF definition is clearly much more focussed on trade and economics. The Gollan observations are broader in their explicit addressing of the issues of politics and culture.

Political responses have been various in nature. Some previously closed economies, such as in Eastern Europe and parts of Asia, have undergone enormous structural, political, and social changes in order to open themselves to world trade. Those changes take a long time, and are still proceeding. Other changes have been confined within a nation state but have, nevertheless, been made in order to meet the challenges of globalisation. An example in Australia has been the movement away from the previously developed award system for wages to a remuneration paradigm that is linked to productivity. Although that change has been fought out and developed within the shores of Australia and its component States, the change has been a definite response to the demands of global competition. Other changes have been affected through the co-operation of several political states. The movements towards international tariff reform is an example of agreements made between governments of different nations in order to facilitate the movement of goods and services across national borders.

Paul Keating, while Australian Treasurer, made his now famous mid-1980s observation that Australia was in danger of becoming a 'banana republic' unless it undertook serious change and reform. Keating's intent was to jolt Australia from an economic complacency that had developed during an era when our primary products, such as wool, wheat and minerals, were in world demand and fetching high prices. The nation had developed the view that it was a primary producer and that economic success and well-being would always be the result of that form of production. As early as 1964, Donald Horne had warned about complacency in *The lucky country*, a warning largely misinterpreted as we embraced the notion we were lucky, but not the warning that our luck would run out.

Keating saw that Australia's traditional reliance on exports of primary products, which faced a decline in demand and price without scope for significant cost reductions, would exact a cost in terms of an unfavourable balance of payments and declining dollar.

Keating did the nation an unpopular favour in making his radical 'banana republic' statement. It is worth noting that Australia's change of fortunes was partially a result of globalisation. In his volume *Island nation,* Boeze (1998) draws attention to Australia's need for protection of its fledgling industry in the 19th and early 20th century. However, he reveals that declining costs of shipping and the emergence in 1967 of Japan as our biggest export market, overtaking the previously assured British market, exposed Australian exporters to a far more competitive environment. Boeze traces the reorientation of Australian political thought and business towards Asia.

As an abbreviated explanation, *globalisation* is the planning and conduct of economic, political and socio-cultural activity beyond one nation, extending to the whole world.

*Internationalisation* is a term that is sometimes used as a substitute for *globalisation,* and is certainly a part of globalisation. Cunningham et al. (1997) make the same distinction between *globalisation* and *internationalisation* when they suggest that global institutions are those 'which, without targetting individual countries, have universal reach or an imminent potential for world-wide presence', and international institutions as 'those which have a targetted presence or reach beyond a single nation' (p.38).

A useful statement of the concept of internationalisation in VET comes from Kearns and Schofield when they write:

> *The internationalisation of VET is a process of change whereby VET responds to the challenge of the emerging international world order in all its dimensions: economic, technological, social and cultural.*
>
> *Internationalisation is a process that prepares VET and its students for successful participation in an increasingly interdependent world. The process should permeate all facets of the work of VET . . .* (Schofield 1997, p.9)



For education and training, the emerging view that Australia needed to reform its economy and participate in a global market had substantial ramifications. The then Labor Government commissioned the 1987 report *Skills for Australia,* which showed Australia as an underskilled and vulnerable society. *Skills for Australia* (Commonwealth of Australia 1987, p.6) lamented that in comparison with other advanced nations such as the United States and Japan, Australia's school retention rates to Year 12 were low. The report also noted that Australia lagged behind other countries in the proportion of the

workforce holding a post-school qualification, and that less than half the people in the workforce at that time held any form of post-school qualification. Only nine per cent of the population held a degree or equivalent qualification.

Those issues have been the focus of vigorous and sometimes uncomfortable reform in Australia over the past dozen or so years, and have been a clear result of the perceived need to become a competitive and productive nation with the skills necessary for effective global participation.

While there was an urgency for reform of VET in Australia, the nation at the same time recognised that it had considerable skill in VET to offer the rest of the world. The opening of the higher education and VET markets in the late 1980s to the acceptance of fee-paying inbound students was seen as a new and potentially very successful export industry. Australia has world-class universities, and a world-class VET system, and is strategically placed to offer these services to the developing nations of Asia. In these countries, the education systems are not so well developed but there is an understanding that education and training represent the passport to a better life for individuals, and for better national economic growth. Australia had participated for many years as a provider of university places to developing nations on a foreign-aid basis, but there was new recognition that many more people in these nations could now afford, and were willing to pay for, their education in Australia. In March 1985, the Australian Government announced that overseas students would be enrolled in Australian education institutions on an unlimited basis, provided they met immigration and institutional entry requirements, and paid the full costs of the course.



Growth of inbound students in Australia has been steady, with the Australian International Education Foundation (AIEF) publication *Overseas student statistics 1997* showing a growth in overseas student numbers in Australia from 20 000 students in 1988, increasing to 151 000 in 1997. This represents a total overseas student expenditure in 1997 of more than $3.2b. The largest numbers of students came from:

- South Korea 18 340
- Indonesia 18 180
- Malaysia 15 711
- Hong Kong 13 778

- Singapore 13 542
- Japan 11 907
- Taiwan 7 497
- Thailand 7 369
- India 5 574
- China 3 748

Source: AIEF, *Overseas student statistics 1997*, p.11

The same AIEF publication reports that in 1997, 42.4 per cent of the 151 000 students were in higher education; 27.1 per cent were in vocational education; 10.5 per cent were in schools; and 20.1 per cent were ELICOS students. Of the 151 000 students, the Australian International Education Foundation (AIEF) reports that 5440 were Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) sponsored students, with the largest numbers coming from Asia, Oceania, and the African region.

The opening of VET to inbound students in the late 1980s resulted in the experience and the confidence among VET providers to take their services offshore as well, and to commence delivery of training programs incountry. That new commitment to offshore delivery enabled providers to deal directly with overseas enterprises and governments to deliver training on a fee-for-service basis. McKenzie (1995), from a management perspective, captures the issues of a technical and further education (TAFE) institution successfully involving itself in the range of opportunities that internationalisation and export of VET services affords. In the same volume, both Symes (1995) and Peacock (1995) also provide perspectives on the opportunities for Australian VET in internationalisation and export.



The 1996 publication by Australian TAFE International (ATI) of *A national framework for the internationalisation of Australian TAFE* was set in the context of a number of 'new realities' for TAFE. These included the development of links with Asia, the export orientation of Australian industry, globalisation, the interdependence of nations, the communications revolution, and the emergence of a knowledge-intensive information economy (p.2). This set of goals was visionary, and captured the majority of the issues and opportunities for VET in internationalisation. VET institutions now participate widely in the provision of training to inbound students, in the provision of offshore training

to enterprises and individual students, and in the development of offshore campuses. The original focus on Asia remains, but has been broadened to now include Europe, Africa, and the Americas. Additionally, VET specialists from Australia have been involved in assisting other nations to plan and develop their own VET systems (e.g. Maglen 1992).

The initiatives in recruitment of inbound students highlighted for Australian institutions a number of marketing, organisational, and pedagogical issues which needed to be addressed. However, in a highly multicultural society, most Australian institutions and their teaching staff had already experienced exposure to people from different cultural and language backgrounds. That enabled some confidence to be felt in the new ventures. Offshore delivery yielded many more issues about working in a different language and cultural environment, in supporting people who were working offshore, and in servicing a customer whose needs were not always clearly understood.

## Summary

Globalisation includes economic, political and cultural factors. Economically, the process is characterised by capital accumulation across borders and the planning of economic activity at government and corporate level on an international basis. Politically, it is the development of relationships and agreements that extend beyond any one political state. Culturally, it is characterised by the movement of people, information and ideas across national borders. Internationalisation differs from globalisation only in that it focusses on one or more other nations rather than the globe.

Australia participates in this globalisation process at many levels and in many industries, including VET. Since the first involvements in internationalisation by VET institutions in the late 1980s, which was characterised by the recruitment of overseas students, Australian VET institutions now also participate in the provision of services to offshore enterprises and individuals, and are involved in the development of offshore campuses.

# VET without borders

## New technologies for training

MODERN COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY is opening the world of VET to wider audiences within Australia and overseas through the use of a number of devices. These include the internet, video conferencing and audio conferencing, computer conferencing, and the development and issue of multi-media resources such as CD ROM. Older technologies such as print materials and video cassette resources have already pioneered a great deal of this opening of access. This availability of learning resources and support systems through technology, and the new demands for VET delivery into homes and workplaces, has also been part of the thrust in Australia towards greater commitment by VET providers to flexible delivery (e.g. Kearns 1997).

The issues to be addressed in this section are largely those associated with using these techniques across international and cultural borders, and some of the considerations that are likely to attend effective offshore VET delivery through technology.



These communication and information technologies can be roughly sorted into two categories:

- non-interactive
  - broadcast radio and television
  - narrowcast radio or television
  - CD ROM, video, laser disk
  - world wide web
- interactive
  - audio and video conferencing

- ✦ computer communication and email
- ✦ computer-based interactive multi-media systems
- ✦ interactive world wide websites

Lundin (1998), in a paper available through the internet, has summarised a number of these technologies and their applications to vocational and professional education. Lundin makes several observations on the value of these teaching devices to education and training in a globalisation context. Most particularly, he draws attention to the ability of technology to create a conversational model of teaching at a distance by the use of networked conversational virtual learning communities and interactive simulations. Lundin suggests that both surface-level and deep-level interactions between teacher and learner can be developed through the use of the interactive features of communications technologies.

A key feature of effective use of these technologies for learning is captured in the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) National Flexible Delivery Taskforce (1996) definition of flexible learning in suggesting 'it changes the role of the trainer from a source of knowledge to a manager of learning and a facilitator'. Crucial about this observation was that the taskforce did not see flexible delivery as being merely the provision of learning materials to the learner. The need for support and facilitation of an instructor was seen as integral. That is a view strongly reiterated throughout the literature (e.g. Billett 1994; Lave & Wenger 1991).

Additionally, other research (e.g. London & London 1996) indicates that the methodologies for teaching and the modes of learning chosen need to be related to the tasks being learned, and that the forms of learning also change as learning progresses. Barry (1996) advocates sensitivity towards vocational education learners in the application of flexible delivery, and notes that independent learning resources can be very effective for confident and competent learners, but less effective for learners who are neither confident nor competent. These findings are clear signals of the dangers involved in using information technologies to distribute education and training material without considering the interactive components necessary to assist learners to construct knowledge.



The work of Mitchell and Bluer (1997) in identifying and developing case studies in the use of new technologies in VET provides a number of insights

into what is and is not successful, and some assistance towards good planning of educational innovation. For example, Mitchell and Bluer have pointed out that the characteristics of the learner group need to be ascertained as part of the planning process, and those characteristics taken into account in the development of teaching methodologies using new technologies. In the projects they identified there was not evidence of that part of the planning process being implemented and used. Mitchell and Bluer also advocate the need for clear learning objectives, development of a common understanding of objectives, and a clearly identified role for the technologies used as necessary components for successful technology-based instruction.

Student support systems attending electronic communication education systems have received some research attention from distance educators such as Valcke and Martens (1997), who advocate building into learning materials devices that activate the student by demanding thought, knowledge construction, or interaction with the instructor. Boshier et al. (1997) researched a number of web-based courses to describe a set of characteristics for 'best-dressed' and 'worst-dressed' courses. In summary, their findings indicate that important components of effective web-based and multi-media-based courses included:

- clear instruction on use
- attractive and easy-to-look-at visual imagery
- interactivity with the instructor
- photographs of instructors and an explanation of their role
- encouragement of further interaction with other relevant web sites



Boshier et al. also concluded that a text-only option is important for learners who do not have ready access to effective interactive hardware or software. They also noted that some web courses had 'glitter in the absence of substance' (p.347), and concluded that lack of substance was the key factor in determining the 'worst-dressed' example.

In an Australian VET environment, Webb (1998a) has developed a theoretical framework for internet-based training at the Sydney Institute of Technology. Specifically, this comprises a set of internet-based training equivalents of classroom teaching strategies, including presentation of materials, interaction between instructor and learner, and between learners, completion of exercises

and assignments, and practical work. In a separate research effort, Webb (1998b) tested student satisfaction with internet-based training and showed that part-time students were much more enthusiastic than full-time students, since they liked the time efficiencies and independence. Full-time students preferred the social context of on-campus instruction. These findings have clear implications for the use of internet and multi-media-based training offshore, where students are more likely to operate similarly to Webb's part-time group. Note should be taken, however, of the finding of Smith, Polgar and Suwarna (1996). They revealed that in Indonesian manufacturing enterprises, comment was made that learners were not sophisticated enough to use resource-based learning effectively without supervisor intervention and support.

Reushle (1998) has reported her study of in-program support to students participating in an internet-based course, and the methods with which students can be assisted through web-based materials presentation and electronic communication. Reushle found there were wide differences between students in the degree of comfort they felt with electronic discussion of subject matter, where some students reported feelings of intimidation while others were comfortable. It can be expected from the work of Hofstede (1986) and Trompenaars (1993) that students from different cultural environments will experience an even wider variety of responses than did the Australian students in Reushle's study.

Naidu (1997) has reviewed a set of principles for web-based instruction which emphasise the need for programs that allow learners to construct their own knowledge and which, importantly for internationalisation, enable the development of a global network of instructors. This network of instructors concept is an important component of web access and deserves further development by VET providers.



Doctor (1998) has recently published what is probably one of the first papers on student support through electronic mail, where she focusses particularly on counselling for students. She concludes that the practice has many possibilities for providing support to students, but that the profession of counselling has some way to go before it is ready for widespread implementation. Main areas of concern among counsellors, as shown in Doctor's research, related to policies of email monitoring by email providers and a need to develop techniques for effective counselling in different circumstances.

# Cultural imperialism

It is commonly observed that western culture, most notably that of the United States, influences the cultures of other parts of the world through the media, film, television, and advertising (see, for example, Cottle 1997; Quester 1990). It is also noted that from time to time this influence serves at least partially to destroy or distort the host culture. The use of the media for educational purposes—either in broadcast or narrowcast form, or through the distribution of educational materials such as books, multi-media programs, video programs, or web-based learning—holds the same dangers unless some attention is paid to the cross-cultural issues involved. Mitchell (1997) writes, no doubt with a degree of overstatement, that 'the internet has become yet another agent for cultural imperialism, and that as a result of the dominance of English on the net, other languages and cultures will disappear'. Cunningham et al. (1997, p.12) draw attention to the dramatic term 'Death Star', which is used to cast satellites as a technology leading to cultural homogenisation through cultural imperialism.

Little research has been carried out so far on the precise considerations that relate to the use of online education programming across cultures, but the issue is recognised. The Office of Training and Further Education (OTFE) in Victoria has recently (July 1998), for example, called tenders for the development of online marketing of VET programs. It has requested as part of the tender that developers engage with issues of culture since the online technologies cross international borders.



Cunningham et al. (1997) have comprehensively reviewed the influence of the new media on borderless education. They suggest that the fears of cultural imperialism frequently expressed understate, at least for televisual material if not the world wide web, the degree to which local controls are imposed on imported media and the extent of choice based on local culture.

Seidel (1997) has suggested that training processes need to be designed and evaluated with reference to the cultural and social circumstances of the training. These considerations are not new to VET, and are taken into account when training is being delivered in an enterprise where there is an established culture. However, Seidel meant more than that. He writes: 'intercultural training can become a problem, when the general acquisition of norms and values by a person (learner or instructor), his so-called acculturation,

dominates his learning and training behaviour' (p.150). He suggests we need to have more detailed information on the structure of intercultural training, and the characteristics of the intercultural differences with which we are dealing. He further suggests that instructors need intercultural knowledge and experience, a view also expressed by Australian TAFE International (1996) in the national framework for the internationalisation of TAFE. Von Baeyer (1997) echoes the same sentiments when he writes of training through virtual reality: 'educationally speaking, it is not the bridging of long distances ... that constitutes the training problem. It is the intercultural training between nations, populations ...' (p.157).

One of the few research papers that so far attempts to address intercultural issues of online and multi-media training has been reviewed by Harasim et al. (1995). The review concluded that previous computer experience, typing ability, and whether the language used in the online course is the student's native language made no significant difference to online course outcomes. While that finding has considerable relevance, the Harasim et al. review makes no mention of any control for level of competence in the language of instruction. However, Harasim et al. make the point that the reason that competence in the language of instruction is less important in online courses than in classrooms is because students can take their time to complete the course. Further research may identify a number of other variables at play, such as level of language competence, language competence demanded by the course, difficulty of content, and instructor intervention.

Some examination of the issues of cross-cultural online training and learning resource materials has been conducted in the United States. The report of two case studies by Gayeski (1991) is interesting. From the case studies she has developed a participatory design model which involves members of the target audience in the design. While that process has applicability in the development of enterprise-based learning material, or even multi-media and online programs designed for one cultural group, the model may yield shortcomings in terms of costs of production and the capacity to amortise those costs over large numbers of participants. It also presents difficulties when applied to the world wide web. Where the web is used for delivery, of course, participation may be over a large number of cultures.

The NET*Working '97 online conference conducted in Australia in 1997 yielded a paper by Aspin (1997) which reviews some of the issues associated

with culture in training on the internet. Aspin poses the question of what constitutes the basic building blocks for studying and researching on the net, and how we develop programs that are inclusive. She concludes that inclusiveness is enhanced by remembering that client focus is a most significant factor in improving learning, and that students may need customised programs, and opportunity to use computer software in their own language as well as having learning tasks broken down into basic building blocks. Throssell and Le (1997) make the point, also made much earlier by Berlo (1960), that it is quite difficult for people of different backgrounds and languages to necessarily share precise meanings and concepts, or to construct them in the same way.

Additionally, there are issues of not only the intent of any given 'lesson' online, or in any other format, but there are also matters of differences in purpose of the learning outcomes. Throughout the world there are different structures for VET, and different outcomes and expectations. Cunningham et al. (1997, p.123) quote one of their European sources as saying 'a global course is not possible, but global course material can be developed that can then be used locally, adapted to local circumstances'. A similar comment was made by an Asian respondent to the Cunningham et al. research.

An attempt to develop some research-based advice on how we might develop training for different cultural audiences is given by Reynolds (1990), when he cautions:

- to be careful with dialect
- to be sensitive to and critical of culturalisation in our programs
- to select voice type with care
- to take care in the use of exercises such as games since these are not seen in some cultures as appropriate for teaching adults
- to address the level of formality used
- to consider body language and simple things such as the currency used or discussed

Reynolds' advice is similar to Gayeski's suggestion of inclusiveness at the point of design. Clearly, a considerable amount more research is required in this area of interculturally sensitive learning resources and delivery methodologies.

# Summary

Modern communications technology enables VET to be provided across distance and across cultures in both interactive and non-interactive forms. Research in the provision of VET through communications technology has shown the need for good planning of the training program, clear identification of the role the technology is going to play in the program, and an understanding of the clientele. Some clienteles do not find technology-only delivery satisfactory, and there is a need to build in human interaction between student and instructor, and between students.

A danger with internationally provided VET through communications technology is that cultural differences can be ignored so that the teaching methodology is insensitive to the needs of some students. Additionally, the training content may be inappropriate when transported from one context to another.

Research indicates that technology-based training can be used across cultures, but there is a need to provide localising influences in the content and training methodologies.

# How cultures vary

## Dimensions of variation

MODERN COMMUNICATIONS AND travel result in a great deal more cross-cultural and cross-language communication and migration so that cultures across the world are having to learn to understand each other. There is concern expressed from time to time that the cultures of the world are steadily becoming 'homogenised' and we are losing the richness of diversity. That homogenisation process is likely to continue at an accelerated pace due to globalisation.

Cultural variation has been the subject of research over a number of years, and has exercised the skills of anthropologists and sociologists, as well as people who wish to do business and education across cultural divides. There have been two fundamental approaches to examining these variations in order to assist understanding, and to facilitate the work of people who need to deal across cultures and languages. The first approach has been to focus on the specific behaviours, beliefs and mores of a particular culture. Mezger (1992), for example, has produced a guide for VET staff to understanding the behaviours of people in a wide range of cultures. Mezger sets out, for each selected nation, some details of the common beliefs of each country. She also provides insights into the sorts of behaviours and approaches that are acceptable to each of those cultures, and some that are not acceptable. Her volume is aimed at very practical assistance to people who have a job to carry out in another culture, and who need to know how to modify their own behaviour to gain acceptance more readily.



A second form of analysis of cultural differences is exemplified by writers such as Trompenaars (1993) and Hofstede (1986), who focus on the underlying dimensions of cultural variation. They are interested in how all cultures vary from each other, and in identifying the fundamental characteristics that are

different between cultures. This sort of analysis and research is extremely valuable in gaining an understanding of cultural variation, prior to identifying the particular characteristics that define any one culture. Trompenaars has identified seven underlying dimensions of cultural variation and proceeds to give examples of the sorts of things that can happen if these differences are not taken into account.

The first difference Trompenaars' research has identified is *universalism versus particularism. Universalism* he describes roughly as 'what is good and right can be defined and always applies' (p.8), while in a *particularist* culture more attention is played to obligations through relationships, and unique circumstances. Trompenaars challenges the reader to explore what to do if faced with a choice between lying to assist a friend in difficulty and telling the truth, but leaving the friend in difficulty. A universalist approach is to accept that the truth must always be told, and to see it as quite wrong to lie to save a friend. A particularist culture may see the obligation to the friend as most important, so that it would be wrong not to assist that friend by lying or perjury.

*Individualism versus collectivism* is a second dimension of difference identified by Trompenaars. Do people regard themselves as individuals, or primarily as part of a group? A strongly individualist culture, such as the United States, focusses on individuals and their contribution to the collective, while a collectivist culture such as Indonesia considers the collective first since that is shared by the individuals.

Trompenaars identifies some cultures as *neutral* and others as *emotional.* In the neutral cultures of the English-speaking world, business relationships are focussed on the achievement of business objectives, and emotions are kept in check. Emotional cultures, such as those of southern Europe, accept emotional behaviour as part of business so that anger and annoyance are acceptable. We in Australia are often amused and intrigued, for example, by the emotional behaviour displayed in the Japanese parliament and reported in our press.



The *specific versus diffuse* cultural dimension that Trompenaars identifies leads to several misunderstandings between people of different cultures. In a specific culture, such as our own, friendships and relationships are expected to be confined to particular situations so that a business relationship is specific and prescribed by a contract. In a diffuse culture, the friendship relationship in

business is accepted as very important, and a deal may be given to a person on the basis of friendship rather than on the specific merits of the business proposition.

Our culture prefers the idea that status comes from achievement while, in other cultures, status is assigned on the basis of birth, kinship, gender or age. Trompenaars refers to this as the *achievement versus ascription* dimension of cultural difference.

Those first five dimensions of difference identified by Trompenaars focus on how people relate to each other in different cultures, but he has also identified two other differences between cultures. First, he notes differences in *attitudes towards time.* In some cultures impressions are formed on the basis of what a person has achieved in the past; while in other cultures what is important is future plans for developments. *Attitudes to the environment* also form a dimension of cultural difference, according to Trompenaars. He points to the fact that some cultures see the origins of vice or virtue as coming from within the person, while other cultures see them as resulting from the environment.

The work of Hofstede (1986) is similar to Trompenaars, but is particularly useful in an education and training context because Hofstede very directly shows how the dimensions of cultural difference impact on the teaching and learning processes. Hofstede sees four major dimensions of cultural difference. First, as with Trompenaars, he identifies the *individualism versus collectivism* dimension. Second, he proposes a *power distance* characteristic of cultures which describes the 'extent to which the less powerful persons in a society accept inequality in power and consider it as normal' (p.307). *Uncertainty avoidance* is a third dimension of difference identified by Hofstede, which is defined by the extent that nervousness results in individuals confronted by situations they see as unstructured, unclear, or unpredictable. *Masculinity versus femininity* is the final dimension of cultural difference. In a *masculine* culture men are expected to be assertive, ambitious and competitive, while women are expected to serve and to care for the non-material quality of life.



In an interesting and useful way, Hofstede maps each nation's cultural characteristics in a two-dimensional space of *power distance* against *individualism,* and *masculinity* against *uncertainty* . Even more usefully, he gives a number of examples of how these cultural differences translate into the teaching-learning process:

- ❖ the effectiveness of group learning
- ❖ forms of questioning in instructional groups
- ❖ the expected authority, knowledge and role of the instructor
- ❖ the use of academic or plain language by the instructor
- ❖ the use of praise as a motivator
- ❖ the structure of effective group learning exercises

## Learning styles and instruction

There has been a considerable amount of research, both in Australia and overseas, on cross-cultural learning styles and strategies. That research has largely taken one of three approaches. The first approach has been based on interviews and observation; a second approach has been to use very practically oriented learning preferences questionnaires. The last approach has been a more theoretical one examining underlying dimensions of learning styles and differences, again largely using standardised learning styles questionnaires. Misko (1994) has reviewed research on learning styles and their importance in planning the teaching–learning process, and it is not intended to cover that same ground here. Misko (p.2) has defined learning styles as 'an individual's characteristic approach to learning', and she clearly conveys through her review of research a sense of individual differences, of stability, and the need for instructors to be aware that not all people learn in the same way.



The Hofstede (1986) paper reviewed above also gives insight into the fact that learning styles are not only the characteristics of individuals, but can also be associated with particular groups. There has been attention paid in the research literature, for example, to the differences in learning style that can be shown to exist on the basis of cultural differences (Tamir 1985; Holland 1980); on the basis of gender (Heikkinen et al. 1985; Brainard & Ommen 1977); on the basis of age (Verner & Davidson 1982; Holland 1980; Canfield 1980), and on the basis of program of study (Alsagoff 1985; Canfield 1980; Smith & Lindner 1985).

The Smith and Lindner (1985) study was conducted on TAFE students in Australia. That study showed learning style differences between various program groups, as well as differences on the basis of age and gender, but was not able to show differences due to culture. However, the research design did

not handle the culture issue well, and merely separated students into those whose native language was English, and those whose first language was not English. As a result, all non-English-speaking cultures were homogenised into one sample, representing a research design deficiency that would have masked differences between those non-English-speaking cultures. In their work on flexible delivery and women in TAFE, Burns, Williams and Barnett (1997) draw attention to the importance of learning styles in the success of flexible delivery programs for women.

Research on learning styles has to be interpreted with considerable care. Although the research attempts to identify learning styles applicable to particular groups and individuals, at the same time it invites new stereotypes to be formed, or old stereotypes to be confirmed. It is crucial, therefore, that interpretations and practices based on this sort of research continue to acknowledge the individual differences that exist among members of the group being studied, and important to look for these individual differences among the group similarities. Additionally, there are problems associated with defining the particular group under study, with a tendency in the research for definitions that are too broad.

An example of interview-based research, where the target group was defined broadly as 'Asian students', was Samuelowicz (1987) in her early attempt to investigate student learning styles at the University of Queensland. Through interviews with faculty staff and students, Samuelowicz came to the conclusion that Asian students tend to have a *reproducing orientation* to study, where they seldom move outside the curriculum and see assessment as a regurgitation of material learned in class. As an early study of overseas students, Samuelowicz' collection of all the nations and cultures of Asia under the one grouping of 'Asian students' would have seemed a reasonable thing to do, although later research has defined cultural groups more precisely. Subsequent research by Biggs (1990, 1991, 1992) and Smith, Miller and Crassini (1998), for example, focussed on Chinese learners and has shown that the evidence that these students are rote learners is largely anecdotal. Biggs' and Smith et al.'s research has shown that there is by no means a reliance on rote learning among Asian students. Smith et al.'s research, though, indicates a number of different orientations to study among Chinese students, including a deep approach to result in meaningful conceptual learning, and a strategic approach where students focus very clearly on the requirements of assessment. Both Biggs and Smith et al. have used standardised learning styles

questionnaires in their research, raising the question of how effectively a single questionnaire can be used with different cultural groups.

The apparent contradiction in these research findings is suggested by Smith et al. (1998) as possibly attributable to variations between the research projects in the types of students tested, the measurements of study behaviour used, and the fields of study in which the students were engaged. Some researchers, such as Samuelowicz (1987), and Hattie and Watkins (1981) have not controlled for discipline of study and yet research by Biggs (1979) and Watkins (1986), for example, has shown a relationship between discipline studied and study approach. Smith and Lindner (1985) showed very clear differences in learning preferences as a function of field of study.

Recently, Dahlin and Regmi (1997) have shown that Nepalese students use rote learning as part of their learning strategies, but they learn by rote first as part of their development to conceptualisation. Accordingly, rote learning is not an outcome for these students, but a strategy used to develop meaning. Research by Marton, Dall'Alba and Tse (1992) has also lent credence to the notion that Chinese students' practice of memorisation through repetition is not necessarily just rote learning, but also serves to deepen and develop understanding. This finding has led to a distinction between memorisation that results in understanding, and memorisation that is rote learning. Yuen (1994) has similarly shown differences in learning styles between Singaporean and American managers in the corporate sector, with the Singaporeans being characterised by abstract conceptualisation and reflective observation, and American managers characterised by concrete experience and active experimentation.



The issue of plagiarism among international students surfaces from time to time and, during 1998, there has been some press coverage of this issue with respect to assignment writing and thesis writing. Taniar and Rahayu (1996) have researched this issue and suggest that it is linked to cultural differences, and to learning styles and expectations. This linking with learning styles and expectations was also made earlier by Tay and Smith (1990) who suggested that, consistent with Hofstede, plagiarism is partly driven from an expectation among overseas Asian students that teachers expect to receive assignment work that regurgitates statements of writers in the field. Taniar and Rahayu identify the same causes, and suggest that early intervention on the part of teachers is required, not only to draw the attention of a student to plagiarism, but also to provide the skills necessary to seek alternatives.

# Summary

Cultures can be learned about as a specific set of beliefs and behaviours that pertain to a particular culture, or through examining the generic features of cultures and how they vary from each other. Learning about a specific culture is useful prior to beginning work in that particular cultural context. However, to be able to evaluate and understand cultures on a more global basis, a generic understanding of their features is more appropriate. Cultures can be described in part by the extent to which they exhibit characteristics of belief and behaviours found in all cultures.

The learning styles of students have been shown to vary as a function of age, gender, and of culture. A number of stereotypes of the learning styles displayed by some cultural groups have developed: for example, there is a view that Asian students are rote learners and regurgitators of text. Research indicates that there are differences in learning style between the cultures of Asia, and that the evidence of rote learning being typical is very open to question. There is also research to indicate that rote learning plays a facilitatory role in the development of understanding among some cultural groups.

# Working effectively offshore

## Developing relationships offshore

THERE HAS BEEN considerable attention paid in Australia to the development of relationships and partnerships between VET providers and industry or enterprises. There are also a number of reports available of case studies and staff development programs. Additionally, State training authorities have identified these relationships as important to the development of VET and have adopted enterprise alliance development as part of their strategies (e.g. OTFE, Victoria, *Planning priorities for vocational education and training and further education in Victoria, 1998*). It is worth reviewing some of the Australian-based research prior to focussing on material informing relationship development offshore.

A central difficulty in the provision of training to industry is the ability to meet customer expectations from outside the enterprise. Most enterprises operate in a dynamic environment where training requirements are forever changing as a result of product development, competition, technological, managerial and environmental change. The need for new skills to meet these challenges is not always recognised by the enterprise and, where recognised, not always readily specified. Hawke (1998) draws attention to the fact that workplaces are not always clear in their needs for training—a lament not unfamiliar to most VET practitioners and managers.



Industry–education partnerships are one response to these difficulties, since they enable the provider to get 'inside' the enterprise and understand and predict its needs more systematically and on a more informed basis. It also enables the enterprise to understand the capacities and response options available through the training provider. Bolton and Clyde (1989) have examined partnerships between employers and further education colleges in the United Kingdom, and report on a number of such relationships. Of particular interest

was the redevelopment of a relationship where the college had traditionally provided apprenticeship training to the company. Bolton and Clyde observe that a 'cosy' relationship had formed and had become unchallenging to both the provider and to the company. Increasing competition and new skill requirements demanded a more vigorous partnership to rationalise and update company tasks, standards, values and needs, and to incorporate these new demands into the learning outcomes of the college's programs.

In an Australian context, Hall (1988) noted that the training resources of TAFE and industry, if combined, could yield a more unified approach to training. Hall's conclusion was that a very open partnership model between providers and industry was required if rapid response was to result in the areas of:

- needs analysis
- learning objectives development
- assessment
- syllabus design
- course design
- teaching methodology
- evaluation

The Regency Institute of TAFE, in Adelaide, was early to develop a model for industry-education partnerships, characterised by early involvement between the institute and the enterprise in any project. The Regency model (see *Australian Training Review,* March/April/May 1998) is more specific than Hall's in that it focusses on planning successful training projects for specific enterprises at the planning stage and emphasises consideration of:



- the value placed on the training by line management
- the status of any relevant qualification
- the commitment of the enterprise and the provider
- planning time available
- training personnel

An early attempt at creating systematic models for industry-education partnerships was reported by Cunningham (1988) at Karratha College. The college developed what it called its *integrated training module,* which was

characterised by industry involvement in course development and accreditation, recognition of on-the-job learning experiences and company training programs, and the use of industry staff and resources in the delivery of programs. It also involved maintenance of academic control by the college over delivery, assessment, and course administration.

Anderson (1992) investigated the factors important to TAFE/industry collaborative success and, on the basis of a number of case studies, identified strategies that TAFE institutions can implement to ensure success:

- meet client needs quickly and responsively
- develop with the enterprise clearly defined training requirements
- develop a mutually beneficial working relationship
- be pragmatic
- develop an appropriate organisational culture
- pursue quality
- invest in human resources
- actively promote the skills and capability of the institution

Anderson's conclusions are similar to those identified two years later by Davies and Hase (1994).

Davies and Hase systematically investigated the conditions for successful co-operation between higher education institutions and enterprises, and identified a set of criteria for successful co-operative ventures:

- the formation of a partnership clearly identifying each other's roles and responsibilities
- open channels of communication, including development of a management group
- supportive chief executive officers (CEOs) and management
- facilitative government policy
- pursuit of quality
- reduction of bureaucratic impediments by development of alternative structures and processes
- a willingness to work together

- ❖ enthusiastic and committed institution staff with workplace experience
- ❖ seed funding and preparedness to commit resources
- ❖ business acumen
- ❖ reward systems for those involved
- ❖ good planning

On the basis of a number of case studies undertaken in their research, Davies and Hase concluded that the principal factors ensuring successful co-operative ventures are:

- ❖ identification and response to industry needs by the education provider
- ❖ clear goals expressed in a contract open to evaluation
- ❖ involvement of the enterprise in the governance, design and delivery of courses
- ❖ funding and other support by government policy
- ❖ enthusiastic staff with industry experience
- ❖ open learning approach to delivery
- ❖ cost-effective courses and obvious benefits to the partners

Kearns, Murphy and Villiers (1996) investigated partnerships in a context of the Australian Vocational Training System (AVTS). The report provides evidence and recommendations that are useful beyond the AVTS implementation, an observation also made by the authors. They explored four major themes—linkages, integrated learning, social and community partners, and lifelong learning. Four models of partnership were used in the case studies: bilateral, cross-sectoral, community consortia, and network partnerships. The research also identified a life-cycle of partnerships with stages of start-up, development and maturity. The report provides insights into the motives and benefits of partnership arrangements, including the benefits of knowledge updating for the VET staff involved while the enterprise training was delivered. The report also provides a good literature review, and reflects on the cultural characteristic of individualism in Australia that mitigates against collaboration and co-operation. That is a particularly interesting observation, which Kearns, Murphy and Villiers reference back to the work of Trompenaars (1993), and provides a valuable insight into the formulation of partnerships in countries with collectivist cultures as well as cultures of individualism. Again, the Kearns,

Murphy and Villiers study has yielded much the same general set of conclusions as Anderson (1992) and Davies and Hase (1994).

There has been little research reported on the development of these sorts of partnerships on an international basis. One such study by Smith, Polgar and Suwarna (1996), as part of the DEETYA (now known as the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs [DETYA]) International Strategic Training/Education Partnership (STEP) Program, investigated the development of collaborative partnership arrangements with the textile industry in Indonesia. That study used an action research model in a complex process of personnel working in Australia and in Indonesia, and across the two major languages involved. The research design used focus groups with selected textile companies, two Australian institutions, and an Indonesian government training institution. The focus groups identified the issues to be resolved through training, and the models for organising and delivering the training. The results of the focus groups were then used to create actual models for training and, subsequently, the models were tested with the enterprises through focus groups again. The research also provided some information on the difficulties of cross-cultural projects where complexities due to language differences led to some differences in understanding of the methodologies to be used in the research, and the outcomes that were being pursued. Because of different understandings of outcomes, one enterprise lost interest in the research when it was finally clear to them that the focus was research rather than increased business throughput.

The methodology was based on the Davies and Hase (1994) and the Anderson (1992) findings, and tested those for the Indonesian enterprises, and expanded upon them to engage with the cross-national and cross-cultural situation. Also investigated in the study was the development of the relationship between the Australian providers and the Indonesian institution, and an investigation of the support mechanisms required to serve adequately Australian VET personnel working offshore.



Two forms of relationship needed to be developed. First, the relationship between the Australian institutions and the Indonesian institution had to be formed. This took around two years of frequent visits and involved the development of friendly relationships on a personal basis to be formed in a diffuse (Trompenaars 1993) culture. A knowledge of Bahasa Indonesia on the part of the main Australian contact person was very helpful at the beginning, but was less necessary as the relationship developed and more people were

introduced into the inter-institutional relationships. Considerable time was spent on the development of the scope of the relationship in terms of research and of training delivery work. The second set of relationships formed were between the institutions and enterprises. It was the development of these relationships that proved the value of establishing the first set of liaisons with the Indonesian institution, since enterprise relationships were considerably facilitated and enhanced through that mechanism. This part of the research confirms the life-cycle identified by Kearns, Murphy and Villiers (1996), but indicated that the start-up and development periods were likely to be longer and more complex than is experienced in partnership formation within Australia, where common cultural characteristics operate, and common understandings are more quickly reached.

The research findings confirmed that, largely, the characteristics identified by Davies and Hase (1994), and Anderson (1992), also held for the cross-cultural training partnership, but there were some added considerations. First, these relationships took very much longer to form than they do in Australia. A lot more effort was required by the providers to affect good working understandings on personal, professional and organisational bases. A great deal of effort was also necessary to gain clarity of understanding on both sides of the requirements and expectations of the partnership. Finally, the research indicated that the time and effort spent on this relationship formation was a crucial component in enabling the work to go ahead with success.

This research and these findings can also be found in Smith (1998), where the point is made that this relationship formation, particularly with an offshore institution, also yields a network of local and expatriate expertise that can be used in the execution of other projects.



A further set of findings related to flexible delivery, the subject of a more detailed twin investigation by Polgar, Smith and Suwarna (1996). The two studies showed considerable interest at the enterprise level in the flexible delivery of training at the workplace. However, although the enterprises saw value in the development and use of learning materials that could be used independently of an instructor, they were not at all enthusiastic for a predominantly learner-controlled form of flexible delivery. The enterprises felt their personnel were not sufficiently sophisticated learners to yield consistent quality outcomes without considerable instructor supervision. These findings are consistent with research on cross-cultural learning styles reviewed earlier.

# Assisting staff working offshore

There has been some research on the skills that are needed for successful work in a different cultural environment, and there are some tests available on cultural adaptability (e.g. Kelley & Meyers 1987, *Cross-cultural adaptability inventory*, cited in Kearns & Schofield 1997) which at least can partially inform the selection decision of who takes on the offshore project. Additionally, researchers such as Mendenhall and Oddou (1985), and Hofstede (1980) have identified skills that enable successful operation in a different culture. Mendenhall and Oddou have categorised these skills into three integrated dimensions:

- the *self dimension* which involves the ability to maintain health, both physical and psychological
- the *relationship dimension* which pertains to those skills necessary for the development of effective relationships with others
- the *perception dimension* which involves those skills necessary to accurately perceive and evaluate the new environment and its people

Hofstede (1980) puts these skills differently in a list that includes:

- the skill to communicate respect
- the skill to be non-judgemental
- the ability to accept the relativity of one's own knowledge and perceptions
- an ability to display empathy
- flexibility
- capacity to share and 'take turns'
- tolerance of ambiguity

The work of Mendenhall and Oddou, and Hofstede, is supported by Hannigan's (1990) classification of factors leading to intercultural effectiveness, namely activities, attitudes and traits. The components of Hannigan's classification mirror those of other workers, but Hannigan has also listed a number of traits that reduce intercultural effectiveness. These characteristics are the other side of the same coin, and include such things as rigidity, perfectionism, ethnocentrism, dependence and task-orientation. These issues will be dealt with in more detail in the section on staff development.

The Smith, Polgar and Suwarna (1996) research also attempted to give very practical institutional and organisational advice on the support of staff working offshore. The authors investigated, through interviews with staff involved in offshore training, methods of maintaining enthusiasm among Australian staff working on long assignments overseas. This maintenance of enthusiasm can be difficult when staff are working in an unfamiliar environment away from their families, their comfort zones, and their usual recreational pastimes. The report lists a number of ways in which it seems enthusiasm can best be maintained.

- Initial selection of personnel who feel competent to achieve the task and 'comfortable' in the environment of the project. Comfort in the environment did not seem to be a result of prior incountry experience, but instead it appeared that work experience, a sense of adventure, an ease in relationship formation, and flexibility in work methods were most important. These findings are consistent with observations of other researchers (e.g. Ruben 1989; Bochner 1986) working in the broader business context.
- Maintenance of health and avoidance of disease were seen by the offshore project personnel as being of considerable importance, resulting in an expectation that good quality accommodation will be found for them, with air-conditioning in hot climates. Access to clean food, water, the availability of Western food as an alternative to local, and familiar bathroom facilities were also required. In addition, arrangements for access to Western English-speaking medical services were seen as important.
- Working in a different cultural environment can be a lonely experience, especially where language differences don't allow for casual interaction and entertainment, and where access to meaningful television watching and news services is inhibited. A need was identified to develop a network of expatriate or English-speaking and Western-experienced local people to enable relief from loneliness and communication difficulties.
- Predeparture briefing is important and needs to cover not only the details of the project, and its environmental and organisational context, but also simple things such as details of transport, food, entertainment options and restrictions, political expectations, customer expectations, and some rudimentary language.

- The research also showed a need for institutional support through frequent communication, and responsiveness to requests for such things as information, books, learning materials and so on. It was felt by participants that social communication was highly valued when working overseas, and that friendly faxes and emails just to say hello, or to give some information on home events or sporting results, were always welcome and 'link forming'. Most importantly, though, where there was a need for an institutional response to support the work of the project, that response had to be quick, accurate, and only requested once.
- Finally, it was identified that there was concern for family members left at home, and that support needs had to be recognised where a family was left without one of its parents, and extra tasks had to be performed by family members during the absence.

## Summary

Working effectively offshore requires attention to two key issues: the development of relationships between the provider organisation and its host or client; and support of expatriate staff working overseas.

The issue of education-industry partnerships within Australia has been widely researched. Partnerships allow the service provider to assess client needs from the inside, and the client to assess the provider's capacity realistically. Offshore relationship building has been less extensively studied, but the conclusions are similar. However, it is clear that building international partnerships requires greater effort and longer timelines.



On the other hand, the time spent in developing a relationship has been found to be crucial to the success of the undertaking and the effort expended yields a network of local and expatriate expertise that is transferable to other projects.

Research indicates that a number of facts are involved in developing and maintaining a successful professional environment for staff working overseas. Some of these relate to the personal and psychological characteristics required for a posting in another country—flexibility, empathy, cultural sensitivity and tolerance of ambiguity. Equally, it is important to attend to practical issues relevant to the staff member while overseas—health maintenance, a network of expatriate support, pre-departure briefing and continuing communication, and attention to the needs of family members left at home.

# Staff development

AUSTRALIAN TAFE INTERNATIONAL (1996) has emphasised the importance of staff development in its publication *A national framework for the internationalisation of Australian TAFE: Guidelines for Australian TAFE institutions*. The strategy statement developed by ATI reads:

> *Staff development for the internationalisation of TAFE involves adapting staff development practices to the emerging international environment of TAFE, and building on the opportunities provided by growing international linkages forged through educational and commercial activities.* (ATI 1996, p.8)

A set of guiding principles was developed by ATI to support the strategic stance. The publication of Kearns and Schofield's (1997) *Learning across frontiers* is clearly in line with ATI principles.

The literature relating to the preparation of staff for successful international involvement falls into two fairly distinct areas of concern. First, there is literature and research relating to the development of cultural understanding (reviewed earlier); and second, there is material that relates more specifically to the design and delivery of effective instructional programs across cultures. Of course, the world doesn't fit neatly into those two domains, and much of the materials related to program design and delivery draws on the wider cultural material.



This section will endeavour to treat the two domains separately, for ease of explanation of the issues.

## Developing cultural awareness

Within the development of cultural awareness, there are two broad approaches as described earlier. One approach is to examine the issues of understanding cultures and cultural differences at a conceptual level, and was

discussed previously through the work of Trompenaars (1993) and Hofstede (1986). That approach focusses on the dimensions along which cultures vary. It is a very powerful way to introduce cultural awareness to staff.

A second approach is to understand a culture at a *behavioural* level, so that training is focussed on the 'do's' and 'don'ts' in forming and maintaining relationships and an acceptable image in that environment. The work of Mezger (1992) and Faulkner (1995) are examples of that approach.

Richards (1995) has focussed his work on cross-cultural management skills. His work indicates that both the conceptual and behavioural approach need to be addressed in preparing staff to work overseas. Richards devotes a significant amount of his work to the issue of 'culture shock' (being a stranger in a strange land). He looks at the way this is manifested in rejection of the culture and behaviour of the host country, and its features such as food, cleanliness etc. Richards' thesis is that people working overseas need to be fore-armed and sensitised to their coming experiences if culture shock is to be reduced. His contention is that an understanding of culture in its broadest sense, and an understanding of the particular culture and country to be visited, are the mechanisms to combat potential culture shock.

The necessity for developing a conceptual understanding of cultures, beyond the behavioural understanding alone, is emphasised by Adler (1995) in her contention that the way in which we are connected to other people and cultures has shifted. Adler argues that we must not limit ourselves to becoming experts on one culture, but we need to be skilful at working with people from many cultures on a frequent basis. Previously, Brislin, Cushner, Cherrie and Yong (1986) have written about the development of a 'culture general assimilator', which takes the view that general cross-cultural skill is best developed through working with specific content. The culture general assimilator facilitates the identification and evaluation of critical incidents. Through the use of those critical incidents with training participants, a more generalised awareness of cultural differences and their impacts is developed. This approach is not dissimilar to the Trompenaars' (1993) development of critical issues as they are resolved by different cultures. In a way that is readily understood and visualised, Trompenaars graphically represents cultures and the methods they have to resolve these issues. Trompenaars' analyses of incidents lead to the development of a strong understanding of general cultural variations. The value of this form of broad understanding is also emphasised in the work of Hughes-Weiner (1986). This author points out that

no amount of specific cross-cultural training at the level of the particular can prepare people for every eventuality, and that it is necessary to learn how to learn about intercultural interaction.

A further challenge to engage in broader training of cross-cultural understanding is issued by Irwin and More's (1994) Australian work. They argue that the need for cultural learning exceeds in importance the need for the more easily effected and possibly more tempting list of do's and don'ts. They conclude that a considerable proportion of cultural training has to be the responsibility of the travellers themselves and can't all be managed through planned staff development programs. This is a view consistent with Hofstede's list of important characteristics for effective cross-cultural adaptation.

The need to train in the particular culture, and at a behavioural level, is emphasised in Richards' work and clearly focusses on the need to be able to operate successfully in the new environment, to understand it, and to understand the behaviour of its people. The need to understand basic social practices and mores is important but, as is evident in some of the literature (e.g. Tay & Smith 1990), it is important not to become too self-conscious and stilted in behaviour through a constant concern that one is 'doing the right thing'. People from other cultures are also able to accommodate the differences that we bring to their country.

## Conducting staff development programs



Another perspective on the issue of teaching for cross-cultural effectiveness is given by Richards (1995) when he examines the characteristics that form best practice instruction within staff development programs designed to achieve cross-cultural awareness. Richards examines the content of such programs, including the issues of cultural variation, behaviour, and training methodology. In addition, he shows that the delivery of effective cross-cultural learning requires a collaborative and independent learning approach on the part of the learner, and a coaching and facilitative style on the part of the instructor.

Richards also reviews the literature on adult learning and applies it to cross-cultural training programs, with the conclusion that learning needs to be experiential at least in part. This concurs with the Kearns and Schofield (1997) view that structured international experience is a valuable component of the instruction.

The framework devised by Kearns and Schofield is important here, in that it advocates the use of a number of avenues to achieve effective staff development for internationalisation. They, along with Richards, suggest that it is not sufficient to run discrete sessions of training where staff engage only in listening and observing. Delivery mechanisms and the sources of information need to be broadened to include learning through the work role, through work-based relationships, from structured training and development activities (including experiential, problem-solving, fellowship experiences), as well as learning from formal education programs offered from certificate to post-graduate level.

Kearns and Schofield provide a good review of available literature in the area of staff development. As a result of their work, Kearns and Schofield emphasise the importance of soundly constructed international experience as an excellent vehicle for staff development. This is consistent with views expressed in Richards' work, that engaging with other cultures is probably the most powerful way of forming understanding and acceptance. Consistent with that same experiential learning stand, Kearns and Schofield also emphasise the importance of the formation of networks to enable shared experience and support mechanisms to develop. Drawing on Kelley and Meyers (1987), and consistent with other writers (e.g. Hofstede 1986; Hughes-Weiner 1986), Kearns and Schofield also address the need to develop the 'whole person' to ensure that the flexibility and resilience required for working in other cultures, and particularly offshore, are also present. Finally, these authors have contributed an invaluable appendix which sets out a staff development framework to support internationalisation, and provides for the integration of organisational goals, international work roles, competency dimensions and personal development.



This appendix advocates (p.82) that the internationalisation goals of a VET organisation could include some or all of the following:

- global understanding by staff and students
- global communication
- international best practice and continuous improvement
- market diversification, expansion, maintenance or consolidation
- revenue generation
- utilisation of surplus internal resources

- product development
- organisational change
- client responsiveness
- innovation

The framework also identifies a number of international work roles. These include VET system development, institutional development, policy development, management, business development, training needs analysis, standards development, curriculum and instructional design, learning materials development, training delivery and assessment, and student services. Competencies such as global orientation, country-specific knowledge, cross-cultural competence, personal mastery and management competence are listed as the dimensions of international competence.

Finally, the framework provides several focusses for development:

- learning through the work role
- learning through work-based relationships
- learning from training and development activities
- learning from formal education programs

The Kearns and Schofield framework is facilitatory in the identification of the roles required for effective international work by a VET organisation. It also assists in the identification of skills possessed, skills needed to be developed, and some of the methods that can be used in developing those skills.



## Summary

Supporting the international program of any VET organisation are people whose jobs are quite different. There are strategic, business and management skills required; sales and marketing skills; training design and delivery skills; and student support skills. Each of these functions has its own set of staff development needs, and research has resulted in a framework for the identification and analysis of these different needs.

Generally, the design of effective staff development programs for internationalisation needs to be broad based and include experiential training, colleague-to-colleague interaction, structured training sessions, and

problem-solving activities. The issues of staff development for teaching staff are particularly important since it is teacher–student interaction that consumes the majority of time and is most fundamental to the training relationship. Research indicates several issues that teachers need to be aware of in increasing their effectiveness as deliverers of training across cultures.

Training in the specifics of a culture is important prior to departure. However, training in general cultural awareness is also important but often overlooked in favour of the particular.

# Internationalising Australian VET campuses

## Internationalising for Australian students

THIS SECTION REVIEWS material available on the internationalisation of Australian campuses to result in greater relevance and comfort for overseas students, and to achieve greater comfort among Australian students with the prospect of working internationally in cultures different from their own. There are important outcomes for overseas students in Australia besides just going home with their Australian qualification. They also go home with a network of Australian contacts, and with experience and a degree of comfort with operating in a culture that is not their own and, very importantly, an enhanced knowledge and set of skills in English. Our Australian students do not, on the other hand, necessarily have those advantages. Added to the fact that we are a fairly monolingual society, living in our island nation a long way from the rest of the world, many of our students graduating from VET or higher education institutions have never had any significant experience living with, and working in, an environment and a culture that is different. In a world of increasing globalisation, that puts our Australian students at something of a disadvantage. The Karpin report (1996) was explicit in its identification of the need for Australian managers and leaders to develop much more competence than is current in their ability to work comfortably and effectively on an international level, and to think in international terms. Lo Bianco (1987), in developing a national policy on languages for Australia, commented on the social and economic value of bilingualism for a modern Australia. The value to Australian graduates of VET to work comfortably and effectively in different cultural environments is a clear ramification of the Karpin findings. Kearns and Schofield (1997) emphasise that VET institutions need to be more aware that international experience is known to be valued in staff and career development.

Research by workers such as Furnham and Bochner (1986), Draine and Hall (1990), and Brislin and Pedersen (1976) has emphasised the importance of reducing 'culture shock', and the consequent need for effective education and training for people moving into new cultures to work. The effects of culture shock can reduce the offshore worker's effectiveness in a number of ways. These include the expression of anger over minor inconveniences and delays, the notion that local people are trying to take advantage and cheat, a decline in flexibility and inventiveness, and a lack of willingness to participate in anything in the host country that is not associated with compatriate expats. These effects of culture shock are well documented, and the exposure of Australian students to internationalisation as part of their VET experience can only serve to reduce the shock and prepare VET graduates for effective participation in the employment that is demanded by internationalisation.

The VET sector is no stranger to campus internationalisation, with the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) 1997 statistics for graduates from TAFE institutions showing that of 60 746 graduates in 1997, 15 845 (26.1%) were born in countries other than Australia. Of those born in other countries, 73.6 per cent were born in non-English-speaking countries. The long-standing presence in VET institutions of students from different cultural backgrounds and languages implies that staff and students have been exposed to an array of cultural diversity. However, there is little evidence that institutions have used this cultural diversity as a way of increasing the cultural awareness and experience of students.

Evidence from Australian research (Elkerton 1985; Burke 1986, 1991; Nesdale & Todd 1993; Nesdale et al. 1995) has shown that overseas students in fact, tend to congregate in their own ethnic and language groups and fail to capitalise sufficiently on their opportunity to network with Australian students. Neither do Australian students take sufficient opportunity to form networks with overseas students, even though these networks will be extremely valuable for both groups of students subsequent to their graduation. There is research (Hancock & Mullins 1991) indicating that it is largely the Australian students who are reticent to network with international students, possibly largely due to the fact that they already have established friends and networks, and do not appreciate the value in extending these networks on an international basis. Todd and Nesdale (1997) focussed their research on mechanisms to increase the likelihood of greater interaction between international and Australian students. Working in a college

residential environment, they trialled an intervention program and then assessed the value of the components of that program. Their findings indicate that any such program is more effective:

- if it has a wide focus and attempts to develop the interaction as part of student daily routine
- where staff are committed to the interaction program
- where student leadership can be evoked
- where student 'ownership' of the program can be achieved

The research also showed that timing was critical. These programs need to start as soon as new students commence on campus, when they are open to new experiences and habit formation.

In the higher education sector, which has traditionally had a greater international focus than the VET sector, there have been policy statements made to support a wider interpretation of internationalisation than only the recruitment of overseas students. In 1992 the then federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training, Kim Beazley, suggested there was a need to shift from a focus on exporting student places to a position that recognises the wider activities associated with international education and the benefits that flow from those processes. Ang and Smart (1996) observed that this policy move was in response to widespread criticism of the excessively commercial orientation of the international student program, and a need to shift that orientation away from the uni-dimensional trade focus.



Two years after the Beazley suggestions, the then new federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training, Simon Crean, observed that opportunities for domestic students had been enhanced through the broadening of curricula to meet the demands of internationalisation. He saw this as resulting in a new generation of leaders, business people, scientists and artists who can work together and share across cultures to develop common understandings.

These broader perspectives were expressed by ATI (1996) when it addressed the concept of internationalisation as a process to prepare VET and its students for successful participation in an increasingly globalised and interdependent world. In their *A national framework for the internationalisation of Australian TAFE* (1996), ATI developed a number of goals (p.4) which were

focussed on the development of broad international links between TAFE providers and the international community, and the preparation of TAFE graduates for work in an international market.

## Curriculum internationalisation

The International Development Programs (IDP) Education Australia (1995) report *Curriculum development for internationalisation* has identified five ways in which higher education can become internationalised, and these five ways are largely available and relevant in the VET sector as well:

- international movement of students
- international movement of staff
- international movement of campuses
- international links between governments, between institutions, or for research
- internationalisation of curricula

(IDP Education Australia 1995, pp.11–12)

The VET sector has been active in pursuing each of these avenues of internationalisation, with opportunities for Australian staff and students to study or to study tour offshore being developed by a number of institutions. The initiative of the Australian TAFE Staff Exchange Council is one example of a response to the demand for international experience. The role of the council is to facilitate the exchange of staff between like institutions overseas and in Australia. A different response has been the commencement of campuses offshore by institutions such as Box Hill institute and Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT). Focussed international training organisations have also developed in each State (e.g. Austraining; International Training Australia) to seek overseas training project work, and to place Australian staff incountry and working on those projects.



At a student level, several institutions provide curriculum-relevant overseas study tour programs. There are also examples of opportunities for Australian VET students to gain academic credit on the basis of an overseas study experience designed and managed by their Australian institution. However, internationalisation of curricula has not been implemented so vigorously in the VET sector as it has been in higher education. The IDP Education Australia

research represents systematic study of curriculum internationalisation. That research comprised in-depth case studies of the internationalisation of curriculum at the Australian National University (ANU), Macquarie University, the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), and the Northern Territory University (NTU). The ANU and UTS initiatives focussed on internationalising the *content* of the curriculum to achieve professional training outcomes, while the Macquarie and NTU internationalisation processes had emphasised the *form* of the curriculum, and the methods through which it is taught and learnt (p.25). The research also surveyed all 38 Australian universities to identify curriculum development initiatives towards internationalisation, yielding a range of internationalisation initiatives:

- curricula which prepare students for defined international professions
- curricula leading to internationally recognised professional qualifications
- curricula leading to joint or double degrees
- curricula with an international subject
- interdisciplinary studies, such as region and area studies, covering more than one country
- curricula in which the traditional/original subject area is broadened by an internationally comparative approach
- curricula in foreign languages or linguistics which address explicitly cross-communication issues and which provide training in intercultural skills
- curricula in which the content is especially designed for foreign students

(IDP Education Australia 1995, p.20)

The IDP research indicates the level at which higher education institutions have embraced the need for internationalisation in a number of forms, but there appears not to be similar research available in the VET sector. Clearly, there are developments in the VET sector, and research on those initiatives would be an extremely valuable addition to our knowledge of internationalisation in VET. Most importantly, there are different issues associated with internationalisation in the VET sector, where the content of curricula is more focussed on specific vocational and employment outcomes of relevance to the Australian economy and its constituent enterprises. Investigation of the impact of these different circumstances on VET internationalisation would also be a valuable research project.

Important work has been carried out at the cross-sectoral RMIT University, with its 1996 project entitled *Internationalising the university.* A number of these contributions are worth reviewing here. McLoughlin's contribution was a report of research on staff understanding of 'internationalisation' in the RMIT context. The findings of that survey indicate that staff were not motivated to make their subjects and courses more internationally competitive, but instead were concerned to ensure their programs were relevant to overseas students and relevant to multicultural Australia. They were also keen for their students to develop sensitivity to different cultures, and to be aware of cultural differences. A contribution by Patricia Rogers takes this a step further, where her interest is also to ensure that students were familiar with international differences in practices, and that the course team developed an international profile to benefit the team and their graduates. A contribution by Wiseman indicated a considerable number of initiatives identified by staff to enhance the internationalisation of their courses. These included attention to curriculum content, language options, field work experience, cultural awareness, staff and student exchange, twinning arrangements, and relationship building between overseas students and local students.

A report of research into peer pairing as a strategy for developing those relationships is contributed to the RMIT work by Legge, who developed a methodology for pairing students from different countries, including Australia, and evaluating the communication between them during their experiences. Student response was positive, although some had found it a difficult process. The majority found it interesting and worthwhile in terms of information sharing of experience and culture. A number reported that study of the subject matter was enhanced through the opportunity to share. A similar peer pairing program was the subject of research by Devlin (1997) at the University of Western Sydney, where overseas students were paired with Australian students with the objective to provide overseas students with language practice and local culture information. For Australian students, the objectives were to increase cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity to people from other cultures. The evaluation of the project was conducted using informal feedback from staff and students, and formal feedback from a questionnaire. Devlin was able to conclude that 'the program is a relatively simple yet highly effective one' (p.76) with most objectives apparently being met. Similar observations were also made by Quintrell and Westwood (1994) with their trial of a peer pairing program.

A final component of the RMIT project was to conduct a series of workshops with the objective of defining strategies for internationalising the institution. The outcomes of this component of the research are too numerous to convey fully here, and the reader is encouraged to access the report from the Internet. In summary, though, the strategies identified included:

- development of clear and agreed goals for internationalisation
- integrate internationalisation into the policies and processes of RMIT
- increase institutional responsiveness to people of different cultural and language backgrounds through provision of support and alternative teaching and learning facilities
- identify curriculum and teaching methodology changes to enable the institution better to serve existing Australian and overseas students, and to maximise the opportunities for these students to develop cross-cultural awareness and skills.

## Teaching across cultures

Some of the considerations in teaching across cultures relate also to the earlier learning styles and instruction section.

Most of the published material (e.g. Ballard & Clanchy 1997; Kenyon & Amrapala 1993) is of greatest value to Australian teachers and lecturers, but there is also material (e.g. Tay & Smith 1990; Ballard & Clanchy 1984) that is written to aid overseas students in understanding Australian education, teaching methodologies, and teacher expectations. Tay and Smith make several observations on teaching differences that are useful both to teachers and students. They advocate that care needs to be taken with language in the speed of speech, the complexity of its construction and the vocabulary that is employed. It is no easy task for teachers to vary speech and language characteristics, but cognisance needs to be taken of the English limitations of some overseas students. The relative informality of an Australian classroom is a difference for many overseas students who may be more familiar with an environment where the teacher is much more of an authority figure who is seldom questioned and is addressed in a formal way. Teachers need to be patient and to help overseas students to discuss and challenge ideas, and to form a more casual relationship with the teacher. Teachers need also to assist overseas students in learning for understanding since discussion of concepts

and their critical evaluation may be a quite new experience, and yet one that is expected of Australian students. Development of processes to draw overseas students into discussion and to reward them for participation and contribution are important, as is the skill to express ideas and concepts in their own words. Overseas students who may be working in a second and less familiar language need encouragement to re-express ideas and text, and teacher encouragement of this is important.

The Ballard and Clanchy (1997) work draws heavily on the research literature for its content, making it authoritative and practical. Similarly to Tay and Smith, the Ballard and Clanchy volume covers the different expectations that can confront overseas students in an Australian classroom, and the need for teachers to encourage more participatory behaviour. Overseas students may find group discussion difficult and teacher care is necessary to ensure that inclusion takes place. New demands that can be very challenging for Asian students are the need to express themselves in class, to challenge established thoughts, and to provide reasoned argument. As with Tay and Smith, Ballard and Clanchy point to the need for teachers to understand these characteristics and to take care in class to assist overseas students. It needs also to be noted that Hofstede (1986) made much the same points in his work on the translation of cultural differences into the teaching-learning process.

## Library services

Onwuegbuzie and Jiao (1997) have shown that international students visit the library more often than their native counterparts, and are much more likely to use the library as a venue for study. Additionally, international students take longer to find the desired information in the library. They conclude that librarians need to become familiar with the usage patterns of international students in order to assist with the development of new skills resulting in more efficient library usage.



Similarly, identification in the RMIT project of responsiveness in terms of support to students of different cultural and language backgrounds shows a need for library service adjustment. There has been some research and a literature review on library services by McCullagh and O'Connor (1989). Their research indicates that the development of effective library skills among international students requires:

- analysis of student needs
- the provision of transferable library skills
- identification of the precise library skills required
- the use of orientation programs
- glossaries of library terms
- modification of language in library procedures to ensure easy understanding
- the use of overseas students who are already familiar with library skills to assist new students

Other research on library service development for overseas students has been conducted by Saw (1989) with similar outcomes to McCullagh and O'Connor, but has also identified the need for cross-cultural training among library staff. Similarly, Wilson and Lauk (1990) suggest that students in different VET programs have different library requirements. However, they reveal that student groups who work on particular tasks in the library with the aid of their instructors show superior library skills as a result of that process.

## Counselling

Early work on the development of counselling services was conducted at the University of New South Wales and the Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association. This was summarised by Burke (1988), who addressed the responsibilities that institutions have towards these students. He covered issues of finance, racialism, social life and support sources, predeparture and arrival programs, and language skills; and subsequently developed a set of principles for a code of practice relating to each of those issues. More recently, Mullins, Quintrell and Hancock (1995) researched the pattern of use by overseas students of counselling services and confirmed many of Burke's earlier principles. Mullins et al. showed that the key areas of concern for both international and local students were financial and study-related stress. Australian students were more likely to rank the usefulness of these services higher than did international students. Mullins et al. also found that international students were more likely than local students to use health, counselling, language and accommodation services, but were less likely than

Australian students to recommend their institution to others. Unfortunately the study does not provide a set of reasons or hypotheses for these findings.

In her guide for counsellors and advisors of international students Tanner (1995) explores, for example, some of the assumptions that Western people make about others, based on our Western culture. She also draws attention to the discord between these assumptions and their application to people from other cultures. She reveals differences in:

- views of normality
- frameworks within which we operate
- use of abstract language and linear thinking
- collectivism and individualism
- specific and diffuse societies
- difficulties in seeking counselling and views of privacy
- the role of religion in belief structures
- the importance of non-verbal communication

Tanner also is a strong advocate for pre-departure and arrival orientation and support, and for pre-return briefing.

## Student perceptions

Finally, Lawley and Blight (1997) have reported on a comprehensive study of the factors that are perceived as important by students from several Asian nations in choosing a destination for study. Their research specifically surveyed prospective students in Malaysia, Thailand and India, and drew on previous similar work in Hong Kong, Indonesia and Taiwan. From the survey results, Lawley and Blight have generated a very useful model of destination choice where they have grouped the factors under the major headings of course characteristics, country characteristics, administrative processes and costs. The research showed some variations between countries in the factors of importance, but the model accounts for these differences. Course characteristics include such things as standards and recognition, while country characteristics were assessed by students on the basis of opinions of family, friends and agents, and perceptions of security and racism, the way of life, and potential to immigrate. Administrative processes related to entry

requirements and processes for institutions, visa processing, exemptions for prior study, and capability to work and study. Costs were related to living, distance from home, length of study time, scholarships, comparisons with other destinations, etc. This research forms a useful basis for institutions to evaluate the attractiveness of their own products and services, and to develop an attractive marketing strategy. There is also information to assist planners of international marketing campaigns to make Australia an appealing country of destination for study.

## Summary

The internationalisation of VET campuses has major benefits to its Australian students as well as to overseas students. Australian students can be provided with skills and experiences to assist them in future employment in an increasingly globalised world, and mechanisms can be developed to assist Australian students to form a network of international contacts from their fellow overseas students. Overseas students also have the benefit of learning skills vital for internationalisation, and also to form networks within Australia. Several methods have been used to assist in these objectives, and peer pairing has shown to be valuable. However, research indicates that without such specific programs of encouragement towards interaction, students tend to congregate in their own ethnic and language groups.

There are several ways identified and exemplified for the internationalisation of the curriculum in higher education, but these are not so evident in the VET sector. More research is required to identify opportunities in VET for internationalisation of a curriculum which is necessarily more focussed on the vocational and employment requirements of Australia.



Institutions intent on internationalisation need to develop clear goals, integrate the policies and practices into their mainstream activities, increase responsiveness to people from different cultural backgrounds, and examine and change teaching methodology and practice where necessary. Student support requirements need attention in the provision of library services and materials, and counselling services that are knowledgeable about and sensitive to the needs of clients from different cultures.

# Findings and directions for further research

THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF VET has grown substantially in terms of inbound student numbers since 1990. With that growth has come a diversity of involvement of VET in providing services on an international basis. That diversity has seen training provided offshore to enterprises and individuals, and the development of offshore campuses. Interest is also growing in the development of technology-based delivery of training offshore. Research indicates that it is unlikely that success will flow from delivering courses created in one culture without modification prior to delivery in a second culture. The program material and its presentation may be transportable, but will require supplementation with local content, and training methodologies that are effective in the second culture. More research is required into the development of technology-based instruction that has real substance and in the support of offshore learners using the material. Specifically, issues such as exercises and local instructor-led teaching methodologies require further research.

The review of research on learning styles indicates that there are substantial differences in the ways that different cultures approach learning tasks and respond to a learning environment. Although there is sufficient research to indicate that there are pitfalls in making assumptions about learning processes in a different culture, much more work is required to affect sophisticated responses to client groups from those cultures. There is also evidence that the learning processes of people in a different culture can be misinterpreted by teachers. An example of this is the use of rote learning, where there is evidence that this is a device used to facilitate learning for understanding rather than being the end-point of the learning exercise.

Curriculum internationalisation has the capacity to serve overseas students better by ensuring greater relevance, but also has the potential to assist Australian students in successful participation in international employment.

Research is required in VET to provide curriculum models and techniques that enable internationalisation of VET curricula, and research is also required into the teaching methodologies that will enhance the experiences both of overseas students and the internationalisation of Australian students. Development of effective international student networks also needs research attention.
The development of staff has had considerable attention, but research indicates that a knowledge of general cultural variations and cultural awareness is at least as important as staff development that focusses on a specific culture. The framework designed by Kearns and Schofield (1997) provides opportunity for the development of key competencies for staff working internationally. In addition, it facilitates the identification of skills required for the many management, service and support roles played by VET personnel involved with internationalisation. Research is required to further identify and refine the competencies required for each group of VET personnel, and to develop the content and methodology for such staff development programs.

The development of support services to assist overseas students in Australia, offshore trainees, and staff working offshore requires research attention. Research indicates that library services and counselling services need adjustment to give appropriate support, as do the policies and procedures associated with the support of offshore learners and staff working offshore.

Finally, there is evidence that successful internationalisation of a VET organisation requires a 'whole of institution' approach, with clear directions set and clear guidelines for the development and provision of services that are integral to the institutional operations and policies. The processes for the strategic development of these services and policies on an institutional basis require further research and guidance to providers.

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This review of research is one of a series of reports commissioned to draw conclusions from the research on key topics in vocational education and training.

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