

# INTERNATIONALISATION POLICIES & STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAMS IN AUSTRALIAN & NEW ZEALAND UNIVERSITIES

Amanda J Daly<sup>1</sup>

1 Charles Sturt University, Locked Bag 588, Wagga Wagga, NSW, 2678, [adaly@csu.edu.au](mailto:adaly@csu.edu.au)

## Abstract

In response to the changing international market, the Australian and New Zealand governments have placed greater emphasis on internationalisation within the tertiary education sector. Subsequently, universities have implemented internationalisation initiatives such as attracting international students to on-campus courses, and student mobility programs. While the literature regarding overseas students' experiences studying in Australia and New Zealand is broad, to date there has been limited consideration of the 'internationalisation' of domestic students. As student exchange programs represent an opportunity for local students to develop intercultural competencies, there is a need for research to examine the issues affecting student participation in academic mobility programs. Consequently, this study examined the relationship between student participation rates in university exchange programs and the institutional policy and strategic goals at 33 Australian and New Zealand universities. The results show that there is a trend between the explicitness of the strategic plans regarding student exchange and the proportional rate of outgoing students. As the success of a policy's implementation within an organisation is affected by factors external to policy itself, it is recommended that future research focus on other push-pull factors at both the institutional and individual levels.

## Keywords:

Strategic planning, academic mobility programs, participation

## Introduction

Over the last 50 years, international education policy in Australia and New Zealand has moved through three distinctive stages- aid, trade, and internationalisation (Baker, Robertson, Taylor, Doube, 1996). The timing of these shifts differs somewhat between the two countries with New Zealand seeming to follow the policies implemented in Australia (Patterson, 1996). The "aid" era characterised by the Colombo Plan ended in the mid-late eighties when institutions were encouraged to actively recruit full-fee paying international students. In 1992, the Australian government recognised that international education is an essential part of Australia's international relations and that accepting overseas students at Australian institutions is only one aspect of the process. This was the start of the "internationalisation" era in which international education programs were seen to include teaching an international curriculum; developing international research teams; providing offshore courses; and offering student and staff mobility opportunities (Cushner & Karim, 2004).

Recently, the Australian Coalition government released its international education policy framework for the coming decade and the principles underpinning it. The new policy framework is based on:

- valuing international education for the benefits it brings to individuals and communities;
- recognising the long-term contribution of international education to intellectual, social and cultural development, economic competitiveness, trade, foreign relations and national security; and,
- enhancing the international profile of Australia's scientific and cultural capabilities (Nelson, 2003).

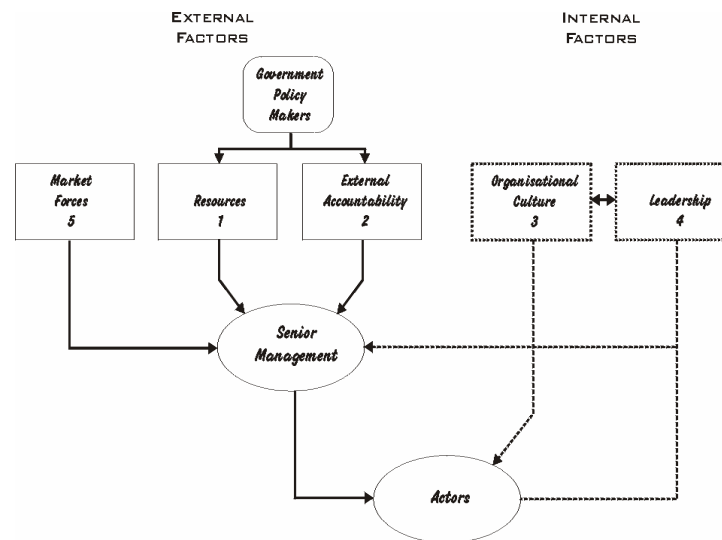
Similarly, last year the New Zealand government recognised the need to take a more strategic approach, expanding the term 'international education' to also incorporate offshore and student mobility programs and, funding a \$40 million international education package through the 2004 budget.

As a consequence, Australian and New Zealand universities are embracing the shifts in international education especially in regards to accepting full-fee paying overseas students (Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee, 2001a; Ministry of Education, 2004). Yet despite the increasing numbers of international students in Australian and New Zealand classrooms, Australian- and New Zealand-born graduates continue to demonstrate relatively poor intercultural competencies and limited knowledge of international issues (Fitzgerald, 1997; Karpin, 1995). Numerous studies (Burke, 1991; Brown & Daly, 2004; Nesdale, Simkin, Sang, Burke & Fraser, 1995; Nesdale & Todd, 1993; Ward, 2005) have shown that domestic and international students tend to maintain distant and superficial relationships. Therefore, Australian and New

Zealand students are not utilizing the resource that their overseas-born peers offer and so they may not be developing necessary skills to interact with others from different cultures. This then leads to the question of whether Australia and New Zealand are achieving the goals of international education- to expand students' ideas, attitudes and knowledge from a local to a global perspective in both outlook and practice (Gatfield, 1997; Knight & de Wit, 1995; Todd & Nesdale, 1997). One of the most effective means for graduates to develop international skills and intercultural communication competencies is through international academic mobility programs such as study abroad and student exchange (Clyne & Rizvi, 1998; Fantini, Arias-Galicia & Guay, 2001; Gochenour, 1993; Lawson, 1969; Wallace, 1993).

As Marginson (2000) points out, higher education policies developed by the government are interpreted and implemented differently at each university. Tertiary institutions in Australia and New Zealand differentiate themselves in goals, missions and programs. In 1998, Rizvi conducted a review of Australian university visions and found that only one university did not refer to internationalisation. In contrast, at the same time most New Zealand universities did not mention internationalisation in their mission statements (Back, Davis & Olsen, 1998). Certainly, this is changing as the strategic focus and practices of Australian and New Zealand universities are following the governments' policies (Lewis, 2005). Therefore, it is important to understand the driving factors affecting how government policy is implemented within the university.

Numerous researchers (e.g. Brunetto & Farr-Wharton, 2005; Johnston & Moore, 1990; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1979; Winter, 1990; Yannow, 1993) have developed models identifying various factors affecting the success of policy implementation. Brunetto and Farr-Wharton's (2005) model is particularly relevant as it was developed and tested within the university setting and examined the responses of Australian academics to the government's quality agenda. As shown in Figure 1, the model incorporates both the internal and external factors affecting the actors (in this case the exchange program coordinators) who must implement the policy.



**Figure 1 Factors affecting actors during implementation (Brunetto & Farr-Wharton, 2005)**

In this model, three external factors affect how a policy is interpreted and implemented within an organisation. The first element comprises the resources. It is generally accepted that the level of resourcing provided affects policy implementation within an organisation, and thus it can be argued that resource allocation is indicative of government priorities (van Meter & van Horn, 1975; Wilson, 1990; Yanow, 1993). Certainly, 'a policy that is not resourced has little chance of achieving its stated goals', (Brunetto, 2000, p123). Secondly, the accountability of the implementer to the policy maker also is seen to impact upon the outcomes of government policy implementation. The third external factor is that of market forces. In the context of constant change in the higher education sector, environmental stability may be considered as an aspect of market forces. Brunetto and Farr-Wharton (2005) argue that senior management mediates the effect of these three factors on the actors through the policies and goals established within the organisation. In the

university context, senior management are the University Council as they are responsible for interpreting the government policy, leading to the strategic goals and practices of each institution.

Interestingly, this model separates the factors of senior management (eg the University Council), which is seen as an external component, from the internal aspect of leadership. In this context, leadership refers to the middle-level managers such as the Director of the International Office, who make the operational and tactical plans based upon the new policy. Leadership is inter-related with the organisational culture and they directly influence whether the policy's goals are achieved (Brunetto & Farr-Wharton, 2005; van Meter & van Horn, 1975). Kilmann (1985 cited in Brunetto and Farr-Wharton, 2005) puts forward that the visible manifestations of organisational culture such as the mission statement and corporate policies, do not adequately reflect the culture of an organisation. Rather, organisational culture is best demonstrated through the behaviours of employees. The underlying assumption of Brunetto and Farr-Wharton's (2005) model is that the success of implementation is strongly dependent on the responses of the employees working within the organisation.

In addition to the factors proposed in Brunetto and Farr-Wharton's model, the literature shows that the policy itself will affect implementation outcomes (e.g. Johnston & Moore, 1990; van Meter & van Horn, 1975). In particular, it is important to examine whether the policy uses specific or abstract language. Interestingly, more episodes of non-compliance are observed in the presence of prescriptive policies (Johnston & Moore, 1990). To determine the degree of restriction and specificity the authors suggest examining key words and phrases and, in particular examining the nouns and verbs used.

The study reported here is part of a larger investigation into the outcomes of Australian and New Zealand university student exchange programs in relation to intercultural skills and knowledge. The current research analyses the strategic plans of Australian and New Zealand universities to determine the specificity of internationalisation policy, in the context of greater national emphasis on this process. More specifically, this study investigates the relationship between student mobility as a strategic goal and exchange program participation rates. It is hypothesised that institutions that have an explicit objective of student mobility will have a greater proportion of outgoing exchange students.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

All public universities in New Zealand and Australia were invited to participate in the study. Across the two countries, 33 surveys were returned. Five New Zealand universities participated in this survey, indicating a response rate of 78%, while 71% of Australian universities (N=27) completed the questionnaire.

Marginson (2000) identified that there are four different types of public Australian universities, based upon origin, structure, missions and goals. These segments include (a) the nine 'Sandstones' - the older institutions which follow the Oxford-Cambridge model and were established before 1987; (b) the five 'Utechs', which have tradition of technical training and mainly comprise former Colleges of Advanced Education; (c) the nine 'Wannabee Sandstones', which also formed before 1987 and aim to have the same social and academic standing as the Sandstones; and, (d) the 15 'New' universities who formed after the 1987 Dawkins' reforms. Following Marginson's typology, there was good representation of each of the types of universities- seven 'Sandstones'; three 'Utechs'; six 'Wannabee Sandstones', and 12 'New' universities. It is also interesting to note that 11 of the 12 regional Australian universities participated in this study.

According to the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee (2001b), the average number of students at an Australian university in 2001 was 18,497, and in this study, the average number of students was 18,995. The size of the participating institutions from Australia varied with the second smallest and largest universities by student population, engaging in this research. While the New Zealand respondents were similarly representative, the average number of students at universities in this sample, 13,407, was slightly lower compared to the national average of 15,708 students (Ministry of Education, 2005).

### *Procedure*

Firstly, a questionnaire was distributed via email to the Student Exchange Coordinator at each university. Participants completed a questionnaire that comprised three sections. The first section included questions about the selection process and types of training offered to students participating in the programs. In the

second section of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to provide non-identifying details of students participating in exchange programs in 2001. This included providing details of the number of students on exchange in each country and information in relation to the discipline in which they were enrolled in Australia and New Zealand. Additionally, details of age and gender were obtained. Questions in the third section of the questionnaire were similar to those in Section Two. However, this area focused on students who participated in exchange programs in 2000. In order to examine historical trends, the final section asked participants to provide details of the total number of students participating in programs during 1996-1999. This paper will report on data relating to numbers of students participating in the program from 1996 to 2001.

Next, the strategic plans for 2001 of all participating universities were accessed through the institutions' websites. Two independent raters analysed the strategic plans for specific statements regarding exchange programs as organisational goals, with 100% interrater agreement. When student mobility was stated explicitly as an objective of the university, this was recorded as EXCH (exchange). An example of this is to 'support local undergraduate students travelling overseas through the University's study abroad and exchange programs'. If there was no mention of student mobility, or when general statements regarding internationalisation (e.g. 'students will become global citizens'), the raters noted that there was no strategic goal in this area (NOT EXCH).

## Results

### Participation rates

In 2001, 2151 Australian students and 164 New Zealand students engaged in international exchange programs. This represents 0.4% of total Australian enrolments and 0.24% of total New Zealand enrolments for those universities who participated in the study. The number of participants from Australian universities ranged from one (0.02% of enrolments) at a university that had just commenced their program, to 239 participants (0.7% of enrolments). A lesser range was noted with the New Zealand universities; the smallest proportion being 0.17% of enrolments equating to five students and the largest outgoing cohort of 67 participants (0.42% of enrolments).

**Table 1: The growth of university exchange programs in Australia and New Zealand between 1996-2001**

Year	Proportion of outgoing Australian exchange students	Proportion of outgoing New Zealand exchange students
2001	0.40 (N=2151)	0.24 (N=164)
2000	0.37 (N=1543) <sup>c</sup>	0.24 (N=107) <sup>a</sup>
1999	0.36 (N=1296) <sup>d</sup>	0.36 (N=57) <sup>b</sup>
1998	0.35 (N=994) <sup>e</sup>	0.19 (N=30) <sup>b</sup>
1997	0.29 (N=623) <sup>f</sup>	0.08 (N=12) <sup>b</sup>
1996	0.23 (N=364) <sup>f</sup>	0.11 (N=6) <sup>b</sup>

a- Four institutions responded

b- Two institutions responded

c- Twenty-three institutions responded

d- Nineteen institutions responded

e- Fifteen institutions responded

f- Nine institutions responded

Between 1996 and 2001, there was an increase in the number of outgoing exchange students. However, the increase in number of exchange students is not in proportion to the increase in total enrolments. Table 1 details the number of Australian and New Zealand participants in international exchange programs since 1996. There is a notable difference in the New Zealand data between 1997 and 1999. This relates to the drop in total enrolments of 2000 university students in 1999, taking overall student to a level lower than that recorded for 1997. When examining the results, it is important to consider that fewer institutions provided historical data than those who were able to report on participation rates in 2001. For example, only two institutions reported the information of New Zealand student participation rates from 1996-1999. Similarly, the number of Australian universities who were able to provide pre-2000 data declined from 23 for 2000 to only nine for the years 1996-7.

### *Participation rates and strategic plans*

In 2001, 58% (N=19) of the participating universities stated student mobility as an objective in their strategic plans (EXCH). Fourteen universities did not state overseas study opportunities for students as a strategic goal (NOT EXCH).

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations of the reported numbers of students participating in exchange programs for both the 'exchange' (EXCH) and the 'non-exchange' (NOT EXCH) universities. An independent sample t-test revealed that there were significant differences between the exchange and non-exchange universities ( $p < .01$ ). While it can be seen by the standard deviations that there is great variation in the reported numbers of students participating in the university exchange programs, the effect size was large (Cohen's  $d = 1.05$ ).

The range of students involved in the EXCH universities' exchange programs was from 10 to 239 students. This equated to a range from 0.07% - 0.7% of total enrolments. Similarly, student participation rates at NOT EXCH universities, ranged from 0.02% (N=1) to 0.81% (N=110). Given this variance, analysis of participation expressed as a percent of total enrolments was conducted. Table 3 outlines the means and standard deviations in this instance. Once again, the effect size was large (Cohen's  $d = 0.75$ ). While the difference in the mean proportional rate of students engaged in mobility programs is not statistically significant ( $p < 0.1$ ), there is evidence of a trend between strategic goals and student participation in exchange programs.

**Table 2: Means and standard deviations of reported numbers of students participating in exchange programs**

<b>Strategic plan</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
EXCH	98.94	74.06
NOT-EXCH	38.07	34.31

**Table 3: Means and standard deviations of exchange student participation rates as a proportion of total enrolments**

<b>Strategic plan</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
EXCH	.44	.26
NOT-EXCH	.26	.23

### **Discussion**

Overall, the findings of this study show that despite greater government focus on internationalisation, very few Australian and New Zealand students participate in student exchange programs. Similar to American and Canadian participation rates, less than one percent of Australian and New Zealand students participate in a student exchange program by the time they complete their studies, with the average participation rate in 2001 being 0.4% and 0.24% of total university enrolments for Australia and New Zealand respectively. However, it is reaffirming that between 1996 and 2001, the proportion of outgoing exchange students in both countries has doubled. Each year, more students are undertaking this educational sojourn.

At this point, it is worth noting that while this study aimed to be a national survey of both countries, only 33 of the total 46 universities participated. Therefore, the identified proportion of students who engage in student exchange programs may not be a true indication of the number of students who study overseas. Indeed, Hamilton's (1998 cited in Clyne & Rizvi, 1998) findings that 0.2% of Australian undergraduate students participate in international educational opportunities considered the programs at all universities. However, in addition to student exchange programs, Hamilton did include other forms of overseas study such as cultural visits, internships and clinical placements. With the broad definition of student mobility initiatives, it seems that in accordance with Livingstone's (2003) recommendation, there is a need to establish greater accountability and improve reporting relationships to determine the correct participation rate in exchange programs.

Universities who had a clear goal of their students engaging in international exchange did indeed have more students participating in the programs. An example of this includes J University's strategic goal,

*To promote internationalisation throughout the University, fostering diversity and cultural exchange by way of international study experiences, international involvement of staff and students and an internationalised curriculum that provides quality learning experiences valued by staff and students. Strategies include encouraging J's students to undertake an international study experience and encouraging staff to undertake international activity of benefit to them.*

However, there was great variance in the number of outgoing exchange students. Further examination of participation rates proportional to total enrolments at each institution confirmed that there is a trend between student engagement in exchange programs and the university's strategic goals. These findings suggest that the number of students participating in the exchange program is not purely related to the policy expressed through the strategic plan. This has important ramifications for policy being implemented into practice.

Raps (2004) argues that the real success rate of the implementation of strategic plans is only 10-30%. Similarly, Parkinson, Astley, Peterkin, Page and Hampson (2003) contend that having a plan does not translate into practice. For example, in another policy context, of all the New South Wales' childcare centres with a sun protection policy, only half of the objectives were evident in practice. In line with the policy implementation literature and Brunetto & Farr-Wharton's (2005) model, numerous factors play a role in the outcome of policies.

As identified earlier, the policy itself, and in particular the language used, affects how the policy is implemented at the organisational level. Both the New Zealand and Australian governments have made broad public policy directions in which the major initiatives focused on enhancing the nation's skills base and competitiveness. In Australia, Nelson's (2003) international education policy framework is a philosophical policy listing broad-based goals using language that is more abstract where the responsibility for implementation relies with each university. Accordingly, it is open to interpretation through a greater impact of leadership and organisational culture (Brunetto & Farr-Wharton, 2005; Johnston & Moore, 1990). It was certainly interesting to note that all of the 33 universities involved with this study could be seen to be complying with the governments' internationalisation agenda, incorporating it within their strategic plans. This confirms the findings that philosophical policies have greater compliance than prescriptive policies (Johnston & Moore, 1990). However, each institution has interpreted and implemented the policy differently as evident by the 44% who do not refer to student mobility. Brunetto and Farr-Wharton (2005) would argue for further investigation of the internal factors affecting how this policy is implemented within the university.

Resourcing is an important factor that would influence the outcome of the university's internationalisation goal. Policy goals are reflected in the resourcing and strategies used by the organisation to achieve them, and in the outcomes achieved. Although in this study internal resource allocation was not investigated, it is worth noting that the Australian public universities receive a combined total of \$1.4 million under the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) program. Moreover, in New Zealand while \$40 million has been allocated through an international education package, no specific funding has been directed towards domestic student mobility. Europe presents a contrasting situation, where the importance of student exchange in developing a regional perspective is clearly acknowledged with 5% of undergraduate students undertaking an exchange experience (AVCC, 2001). Indeed, the European Union has a 27-year history of promoting mobility in higher education (Teichler & Gordon, 2001) with extensive financial support also provided to programs such as ERASMUS (de Wit & Callan, 1995). Without financial support from the government, university senior management will not view the policy as a high priority (Yanow, 1993). Furthermore, as in the UK, Australian and New Zealand universities will not see exchange students as being as attractive as full-fee paying overseas students and consequently limited resources, including staff, will be directed towards student mobility programs (Malicki, 2003).

Brunetto and Farr-Wharton (2005) contend that market forces also affect the success of policy implementation. Since the 1990's there has been a shift from elite to mass higher education and as a consequence, the student body has not only grown, but also become more diverse (Mc Innis & James, 1995). This change may impact on student mobility programs. For example, while tertiary education has been made more accessible to students from a range of socio-economic backgrounds (Marginson, 2000), affordability of

educational activities such for student exchange programs is an issue to be considered for students from lower socioeconomic and disadvantaged backgrounds. Certainly, several authors have found that cost is factor influencing a student's decision to study abroad (Clyne & Rizvi, 1998; Daly, 2002; Gatfield, 1997; Kwok, 1972; Leong, 1972; Kim, 1998; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; New Zealand Vice Chancellors' Committee, 2002).

Moreover, it is important to consider global events which would impact upon the proposed goals of the international education policies. In particular when discussing initiatives in which students travel abroad, personal security is an issue in the decision making process (Clyne & Rizvi, 1998; Daly, 2002; Gatfield, 1997). Given that in the last four years two of the most popular destinations for Australian and New Zealand exchange students, the United Kingdom and the United States of America (Daly & Barker, 2005), have both suffered from terrorist attacks it would be worthwhile investigating rates of student participation in exchange programs since 2001.

Clearly, student participation in university exchange programs is not purely related to the specificity of the institution's strategic plan. While the international education policies have been implemented in tertiary institutions, the objectives relating to preparing graduates to work in the global marketplace may not be achieved for reasons beyond the implementation mode. It is proposed that additional factors could push students towards engaging in study overseas, or pull them to remain within their home country and university. These factors include the university's resources, including financial support; non-education issues such as culture novelty; and the personal characteristics of the student. Future research in this area should examine these additional issues as moderating variables influencing the effects of participation in a student exchange program. More specifically, studies should consider the role of overseas study in relation to developing the global employee.

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