

Investigating Attitudes toward International Students: Programme and Policy Implications for Social Integration and International Education

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International education is a thriving industry, but relatively little is known about its consequences for the social integration of international scholars in educational institutions or the wider community. This paper reviews research on attitudes toward international students as a key component of intercultural relations and a significant marker of social cohesion. An organizational framework for the investigation of these attitudes is proposed with threat mediating the influences of personal and situational factors on attitudinal outcomes and contextual factors influencing the process of attitude development and maintenance. A model derived from this framework is then tested with student, teacher and community samples. A “tipping point” in attitudes toward international students as a function of the proportion of international enrolments in educational institutions is also explored. Finally, the applicability of the findings for promoting social cohesion in educational institutions and the wider community is discussed.

Biography

Colleen Ward is Professor of Psychology and Director of the Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research, Victoria University of Wellington. Her areas of research expertise include identity, acculturation, adaptation and intercultural relations, topics summarized in *The Psychology of Culture Shock* and featured in over 130 journal articles and book chapters. Professor Ward was the Royal Society of New Zealand’s James Cook Fellow in Social Science (2005-7) and Past President of the Asian Association of Social Psychology (2005-7). She is currently President Elect of the International Academy of Intercultural Research. In relation to international education, Professor Ward was keynote speaker at Sharing Knowledge with Global Partners, 150th Anniversary of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (Zurich, 2005) and the annual European Council of International Schools Conference (Nice, 2006). She will deliver an invited address at Becoming a European: Cultural Adaptation and Culture Learning of Erasmus Programme Exchange Students in Warsaw next year.