

Measuring the ‘Home’ in Homestay

Although homestay has been a prominent form of international student accommodation for decades, there is still very little research into what makes a ‘good’ homestay host. Furthermore, many organisers of homestay have little but ‘gut-feel’, known track-records and personal experience to help them select homestay hosts. These issues, combined with the fact that there is very little available in terms of training for those in charge of homestay placements, means that the quality and success of homestay arrangements vary dramatically across the board.

This paper reports on current, ongoing research into the development of a profiling tool that measures the attitudes of homestay hosts. Four Likert-type scales were developed to investigate the attitudes of homestay hosts with regard to:

1. Expectations about international student settlement into the homestay
2. Money and financial management
3. Beliefs about homestay host and student interactions in the home, and
4. Availability to care for homestay students

The scales were informed by and built on previous research into a) the roles of homestay hosts (Richardson, 2001), and b) the welfare needs of international students (Richardson, 2009). The profiling tool is being developed to help homestay accommodation organisations match potential and current hosts with the needs of international students, as well as to ascertain the hosts’ ongoing professional development needs.

Key Words

International student accommodation, Homestay, Homestay host