

# Quality pastoral care is crucial for successful integration: A case study of school practices

Manaia Chou-Lee<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Auckland, School of Education and Social Work, Auckland, New Zealand. Email: [research@chou-lee.com](mailto:research@chou-lee.com)

The increasing demand for tertiary education, combined with reduced transport and communication costs, and a need for skilled people in an internationalised labour market has led to a significant rise in student mobility. As a response, New Zealand has increased marketing strategies overseas and adapted nationwide policies to encourage further growth in export education services to provide economic, social and cultural benefits to society. Therefore, international student numbers have risen considerably also resulting in an increase of qualified students wanting to migrate permanently. These activities have created, and will continue to create, an even more diverse society requiring a more prominent need for integration of international students, into host communities and schools, to shape an environment that is congruent to the needs of all those involved.

International students will face cultural and psychological change upon arrival in New Zealand. This change can be conceptualised as the acculturation process. Accordingly, students will develop a particular acculturation strategy – separation, integration, marginalisation, or assimilation – dependent on how well they participate, or are invited to participate, in two essential issues: forming relationships with other groups in society and maintaining their heritage culture. Research has shown that the individual acculturation strategy of integration will help international students adapt better to the various transitions they encounter in a new country as well as prove more beneficial for a host country embracing a multicultural society.

In this study, data were collected from 131 international students and 24 teachers, at an international secondary school in New Zealand, to investigate school practices affecting integration of international students. Analysis identified five areas of best practice, which will aid in policy realisation and support integration: the homestay, the role of the teacher/tutor, group work, education and activities outside the classroom, and Orientation. The majority of these areas fall under the Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016. Therefore, evidence from this study suggests that pastoral care practices must be implemented at a high level and will require further improvement at micro and macro levels in New Zealand society in order to foster successful integration of international students.

**Key words:** International students, integration, pastoral care, acculturation, best practice

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## Biography:

Manaia Chou-Lee has 15 years experience in the field of secondary school education and has taught international students both in New Zealand and overseas. In addition, she has held middle and senior management positions where a key part of her role was academic counselling and pastoral care of international students and minority groups. She is passionate about the well-being of international students and is planning to continue her current research into PhD study.