

International students' perceptions of the learning environment and support services at a New Zealand university

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During the last ten years increasing attention has been given to reducing costs in universities and enhancing financial returns. This attention places demands on support services tasked with providing support for international students and with increasing the revenue stream from international education. Increased diversity of cultures, nationalities and education backgrounds stemming from an international student body of size and substance places demands for enhanced support services both in terms of academic and living support. Several questions come to mind: How well do universities provide good levels of support to international students and how do international students perceive the teaching-learning environment of the university and availability and quality of support services? This paper reports findings from interviews of selected international students at one university, Massey University in New Zealand. The purpose of these interviews was twofold: To evaluate the teaching-learning environment of the university and to examine the quality of support services available to the international students. The findings revealed many differences between the expected and the perceived learning environments and support services. These differences suggest opportunities exist for some improvements in academic support to international students. In relation to the life, social and community support available to students, the majority of students reported positively and appeared satisfied with the services. The majority of students admired the International Student Support Office (ISSO) staff and reported that staff went the extra mile to support them. The findings suggested a need to acknowledge the differences between the previous teaching-learning environments of students in their home countries and the current New Zealand educational system and act accordingly to ensure a smooth transition to the foreign system of education. Findings also suggested there was room to consider adding other dimensions to the support services to enhance international students' adjustment in the educational and vocational system of New Zealand and ensure an intentionally quality fit and compliance with the *Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students*.

Key Words: Pastoral care, learning & teaching, support services.

Biography:

Anil Kaushik has a background in education in India and is currently completing his PhD at Massey University in Education. A lively interest in the experiences of international students in the Education environment has led to an interest in researching and commenting about those experiences. Anil has served on the executive of the international postgraduate and mature students club one of the largest clubs in the university and in that role has had extensive involvement with a wide range of international students.