

ASIA: NZ RESEARCH

ASIA NEW ZEALAND FOUNDATION • BUILDING NEW ZEALANDERS' KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF ASIA

TRACKING STUDY SERIES of Asian Business Graduates

REPORT 3

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ACRONYMS

INZ	Immigration New Zealand
PR	Permanent Residency: an immigration status that allows a person to live and work in New Zealand indefinitely and enjoy the same access to social services as a New Zealand citizen. A person's eligibility for PR is based on their 'points' (according to employment, education, age and other factors).
PRC	The People's Republic of China

NOTES

Pseudonyms are used throughout this report to protect the identities of research participants and observers.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In August 2008 the Asia:NZ commissioned International Student Ministries of New Zealand to undertake a three-year longitudinal tracking study of Asia-born, New Zealand-educated business graduates, examining their role in the development of New Zealand-Asia business relationships.

The study was completed in three phases between mid-2008 and mid-2011. This report covers the third and final phase, which involved 41 participants (including 10 new interviewees) who identified with seven occupational situations:

- New Zealand-based degree-related employment;
- overseas-based degree-related employment;
- New Zealand-based part-time or temporary employment;
- overseas-based part-time or temporary employment;
- unemployment, searching for New Zealand-based employment;
- unemployment, searching for overseas-based employment; and
- postgraduate study.

The report discusses their views of their occupational pathways and experiences in relation to:

- their earlier expectations;
- their New Zealand business qualifications;
- New Zealand's immigration processes; and
- the maintenance of Asia-New Zealand connections.

It also explores their thoughts about and involvement in Asia-New Zealand business relationships.

KEY PHASE THREE FINDINGS INCLUDE:

- experiences while studying and since graduating from New Zealand business programmes;
- perceptions of New Zealand and New Zealanders; and
- hopes for the future.

EMPLOYMENT-ASSISTING FACTORS

Graduates identified work experience and social connections as keys to success in finding work.

As in Phase Two of the study, they said that career guidance and job search support services offered by educational institutions varied in their effectiveness. Instead, their personal attributes seemed to shape their employment outcomes.

When asked to offer employment-related advice for future students and graduates, the participants highlighted the importance of finding work experience, developing social connections, and relating well to people.

IMMIGRATION-RELATED EFFECTS

The graduates reported mixed immigration experiences, including some challenges in understanding and progressing through immigration processes. Many lacked an understanding of the study-work-residence pathway, which indicates a need for education in this area and for Immigration New Zealand (INZ) to develop and refine its policies and processes.

FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON NEW ZEALAND BUSINESS QUALIFICATIONS

The participants largely had positive perceptions of New Zealand business qualifications. However, many alluded to a lack of practical experience and competency development in degree programmes, which could help to smooth the study-to-work transition.

BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

Many participants who in earlier phases had expressed a keen interest in business careers revealed a strong desire to contribute to New Zealand-Asia business relationships.

Some took an entrepreneurial approach, describing successful entrepreneurial ventures or plans for future initiatives. The accounts of successful graduate entrepreneurs highlighted the unique social capital (the social knowledge, connections, and familial and other social networks) of some Asia-born graduates and their potential role in fostering creative New Zealand-Asia business relationships.

INTERPERSONAL CONNECTIONS

All the graduates expressed a strong desire to continue the interpersonal relationships they had established during their study years and maintain links with New Zealand and New Zealanders. In some cases this was despite their not being able to find work in New Zealand.

GRADUATES' POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO ASIA-NEW ZEALAND BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

Combined, the report 2 and report 3 participants described 12 ways in which Asia-born, New Zealand-educated business graduates could contribute to Asia-New Zealand business relationships – in Asia, in a 'bridging' capacity and in New Zealand.

In Asia, these were:

- providing New Zealand-related advice to businesses;
- sharing New Zealand expertise;
- promoting New Zealand-Asia business relationships in an entrepreneurial capacity; and
- promoting New Zealand-Asia business relationships at a policy level.

In a bridging capacity, these were:

- advising both Asia- and New Zealand-based companies on areas of potential conflict or cultural misunderstanding;
- working to promote understanding and exchange in educational contexts;
- developing New Zealand-Asia business (trade or entrepreneurial) relationships;
- providing a bridging connection for business investment migrants; and
- helping New Zealand companies to build relationships with Asian businesses.

In New Zealand, these were:

- providing companies with Asia-related services;
- promoting New Zealand-Asia business relationships in an entrepreneurial capacity; and
- providing Asian clients with accessible, culturally appropriate services.

CONCLUSION

This study focused on the role of Asia-born, New Zealand-educated business graduates in the development of Asia-New Zealand business relationships.

While most Phase Three participants were relatively new graduates, the results were extremely promising. Given the opportunity, Asia-born, New Zealand-educated business graduates can have a unique role in fostering Asia-New Zealand business connections, whether based in New Zealand or Asia.

In addition, entrepreneurial graduates' social and business literacy in both Asia and New Zealand can enable them to develop creative and innovative business connections in both places. The factors that graduates associated with more negative views of New Zealand or a disinterest in pursuing or promoting ongoing New Zealand-Asia business connections included immigration 'roadblocks' (in New Zealand) and education marketing promises being overblown or inaccurate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

GOVERNMENT

Develop a consistent set of policies and practices that recognise the value of Asia-born, New Zealand-educated business graduates to New Zealand. There is a need to refine, develop and integrate policy and practice in international education, trade, immigration and employment.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

- Work with Immigration New Zealand (INZ) to ensure that students are provided with immigration-related advice early in their studies.
- Address the need for more practical work experience opportunities for both students and graduates.
- Provide excellent careers advice.
- Recognise all students as potential 'international graduates' by internationalising business curricula.
- Ensure that marketing promises reflect reality.

BUSINESS

- Recognise Asia-born graduates' social capital as Asia- and New Zealand-literate people able to initiate, develop and enhance businesses in New Zealand, in Asia, or in a bridging capacity.
- Work with INZ and business schools to provide more opportunities for work experience and internships.
- Encourage professional organisations to educate prospective employers on the potential value of employing Asia-born business graduates.
- Provide advice on immigration matters for Asia-born business graduates without Permanent Resident (PR) or citizenship status.

RESEARCH

- Undertake further longitudinal research on the post-graduation pathways of Asia-born, New Zealand-educated graduates in a longer timeframe.
- Undertake research on the relationships between graduates' social networks and labour market trends and performance.

INTRODUCTION

In August 2008 the Asia:NZ commissioned International Student Ministries of New Zealand to undertake a three-year, nationwide, longitudinal study of the experiences of Asia-born, New Zealand-educated business graduates.

We were to:

- recruit students in the final phases of their courses (when contemplating the step beyond graduation);
- follow new graduates as they tried to find work and adjust to working in New Zealand or elsewhere; and
- examine the role of Asia-born business graduates in developing and maintaining New Zealand-Asia relationships.

Specifically, we were interested in following graduates' pathways in New Zealand, in their countries of origin, and elsewhere. We wanted to examine their transition to new employment, their retrospective views on studying in New Zealand, and their ongoing connections (if any) with New Zealand and New Zealanders.

This report on the third (and final) phase of study provides:

- an explanation of our study methodology in relation to emerging research issues;
- an outline of the Phase Three results in relation to the Phase One and Two findings;
- a discussion of the Phase Three results and study findings overall; and
- recommendations for future research and for immigration, business and education stakeholders.

The report has six sections:

- section one establishes the context for Phase Three. It revisits the aims and findings of Phases One and Two, and discusses the socioeconomic climate for Phase Three;
- section two revisits the study design and discusses the Phase Three research approach in relation to issues that emerged with data collection in Phases Two and Three;
- section three outlines the Phase Three research findings;
- section four discusses these findings in relation to academic literature, the context of the study, and the study in its entirety;
- section five identifies opportunities for future research; and
- section six makes recommendations for stakeholders in policy, business and education.

1. BACKGROUND

This report should be read in light of the first and second reports.¹

The first report provided:

- a broad description of the New Zealand tertiary education sector as it relates to this study;
- an explanation of the language used in reporting on the study; and
- a brief history of Asian migration in New Zealand.

The second report discussed more recent developments, including the 2008 global financial crisis.

REVISITING PHASE ONE

Phase One researched final-year (or senior) Asia-born, New Zealand-based business students' perspectives in relation to:

- why they had chosen to study business;
- why they had chosen to study in New Zealand;
- their experiences of living and studying in New Zealand to date; and
- their expectations for the future.

Between October 2008 and April 2009, a total of 131 students fitting the study criteria completed an online survey and an additional 40 took part in in-depth interviews.

The reasons for participants choosing to study business fell into three categories:

- personal reasons, such as career-related aspirations and personal interests in business as an area of study;
- familial reasons, such as parents' employment or encouragement from family and friends; and
- educational reasons, such as prior secondary or tertiary education experiences.

Their reasons for choosing to study in New Zealand varied. For many with PR or New Zealand citizenship status, studying in New Zealand was an obvious choice. Others described New Zealand as an attractive study destination owing to its English-language-based business courses, its relative affordability, its unique natural and human environment, and its 'difference' as a study destination away from home.

Most participants reported positive experiences in New Zealand, although some had found it difficult to build relationships with 'locals'. Students who reported positive relationships with (non-Asian) New Zealanders emphasised that developing trust took time and opportunities to prove trustworthiness, for example through volunteer work, involvement in student and community organisations, and employment.

Most Phase One participants' post-graduation expectations centred on the desire to obtain 'good' or 'well paid' jobs. About half wanted to gain PR status and live and work in New Zealand, at least initially. All expressed a strong interest in maintaining links with New Zealand and with those they had met during their time of study. Some spoke about the possibility of engaging in future New Zealand-Asia business ventures.

Our Phase One report commented on the importance of:

- communicating with students and their parents when marketing business as a subject area;
- ensuring that New Zealand remains an affordable study destination for Asia-born students;
- recognising the value of personal links and the power of recommendations in attracting students to New Zealand; and
- working to support students' career pathways through work placement opportunities and fostering strategic allies.

Three questions that emerged from or remained unanswered in Phase One contributed to the Phase Two study:

- how well are students' expectations realised post-graduation?;
- what is the role of existing relationships in graduates' ongoing transition to work?; and
- what role do graduates play in developing and maintaining New Zealand-Asia relationships?

¹ McGrath T., Anderson, V., Ching, C. P., Doi, A., and Stock, P. (2009). *Tracking Study Series of Asian Business Graduates: Report 1*. Wellington: Asia New Zealand Foundation. Available from: <http://www.asianz.org.nz/our-work/knowledge-research/research-reports/business-research>

REVISITING PHASE TWO

Phase Two data was collected between October 2009 and May 2010. We conducted interviews with 31 participants (28 from Phase One), and 45 of the initial 131 study participants completed the second online survey. During the Phase Two data-collection period, only 13 of the 76 participants were still studying. The rest were:

- in New Zealand-based degree-related employment (23);
- in Asia-based degree-related employment (seven);
- in New Zealand-based temporary, part-time or volunteer work (15);
- in Asia-based temporary, part-time or volunteer work (two); or
- unemployed (16).

The participants described a diverse range of experiences and perspectives. Overall the extent to which individuals' expectations had been realised depended on their success in finding meaningful work that was relevant to their qualifications and/or offered likely pathways to such work.

Graduates who hadn't found degree-related work were the most likely to have negative perceptions of their business qualifications. Their accounts highlighted the value of helping students to access work experience opportunities and the importance of ensuring substance behind an education 'brand'.

The Phase Two participants identified four factors as helping or likely to help them to find meaningful work:

- volunteer or other work experience;
- social connections;
- personal attributes (including meaningful qualifications, experience, communication skills, English-language proficiency, confidence and effort); and
- relevant job search support or career guidance.

They said that the barriers to employment included:

- a lack of work experience;
- being seen as 'Asian' or 'foreign' in New Zealand;
- the economic recession;
- irrelevant, or a lack of, job search support or career guidance; and
- factors such as being perceived as over-qualified, time pressure (trying to maintain part-time work while searching for permanent work), and a lack of internship opportunities.

The participants identified eight ways in which they could contribute to Asia-New Zealand relationships – in Asia, in a 'bridging' capacity and in New Zealand.

In Asia, these were:

- providing New Zealand-related advice to businesses;
- sharing New Zealand expertise; and
- promoting New Zealand-Asia business relationships at a policy level.

In a bridging capacity, these were:

- advising both Asia- and New Zealand-based companies on areas of potential conflict or cultural misunderstanding;
- working to promote understanding and exchange in educational contexts; and
- developing New Zealand-Asia business (trade) relationships.

In New Zealand, these were:

- providing companies with Asia-related services; and
- providing Asian clients with accessible, culturally appropriate services.

The Phase Two recommendations for policy, education providers and business stakeholders included that:

- immigration policy reflect the likelihood that many graduates' employment pathways will be circuitous, and recognise their long-term value as employees;
- business education providers provide students with transparent career information and promote work experience opportunities both within and outside their business education programmes;
- educational institutions ensure that all students have access to relevant, quality job search support and career guidance; and
- business organisations and the Department of Labour help in developing work experience programmes, educating the business community on the strategic value of employing Asia-born business graduates, and educating students on the study-to-work pathway.

THE PHASE THREE CONTEXT

Phase Three took place while New Zealand was experiencing the ongoing effects of the 2008 global financial crisis, which included continued economic uncertainty and increased unemployment,² in particular youth unemployment.

According to the Department of Labour, youth unemployment rates in 2011 are 7.9 percentage points higher than during the five years previously (17.5 percent compared with 6.6 percent for the general population).³

As noted in the Phase Two report, Asian people in New Zealand are youthful and highly skilled relative to the general population, but they experience high levels of under employment and higher levels of unemployment than European New Zealanders.⁴

In 2009, the labour force participation rate for Asian people in New Zealand was 66 percent, lower than for European (70 percent) and Maori people (67 percent), but higher than for Pacific peoples (62 percent).⁵ The Department of Labour notes that the seniority of the European population masks its relatively high level of labour market participation. Equal age-specific levels of participation for Asian people would be 77 percent (75 percent for Maori and Pacific people).⁶

Many countries in Asia have also experienced economic uncertainty and increased unemployment since 2008,⁷ in particular those with highly internationalised economies and close economic ties to the United States.⁸ Mok (2010) suggests that many governments in Asia have prioritised education spending in response to economic uncertainty, inflationary pressures and high levels of unemployment.⁹

The Phase Three report noted that:

- despite (or perhaps because of) economic uncertainty in New Zealand, between 2006 and 2009 there was a 6.3 percent increase in tertiary education enrolments for domestic students aged 18 to 24 years,¹⁰ and
- there had been a strong upward trend in international student enrolments in New Zealand between 2008 and 2009.¹¹ Preliminary indications are that, despite continuing economic pressures in the Asia-Pacific region, this upward trend will continue, albeit at a more gradual rate.

2 Department of Labour (2010). *Labour Force Participation in New Zealand: Recent trends, future scenarios and the impact on economic growth*. Wellington: Department of Labour. Available from: <http://www.dol.govt.nz/publications/lmr/participation/summary/index.asp>

3 'Youth' is defined as people aged between 15 and 24 years. See: Department of Labour (2011). *Youth Labour Market Factsheet – March 2011*. Wellington: Department of Labour. Available from: <http://www.dol.govt.nz/publications/lmr/quick-facts/youth.asp>

4 Badkar, J., and Tuya, C. (2010). *The Asian Workforce: A critical part of New Zealand's current and future labour market*. Wellington: Department of Labour.

5 Department of Labour (2010).

6 Ibid.

7 Mok, K. H. (2010). The global economic crisis and educational development: Responses and coping strategies in Asia. *Journal of Education Policy*, 25(6), 777-784.

8 Wang, J. C. (2010). The strategies adopted by Taiwan in response to the global financial crisis, and Taiwan's role in Asia-Pacific economic integration. *Japan and the World Economy*, 22(4), 254-263.

9 Mok (2010).

10 Wensvoort, M. (2010). *Tertiary Education Enrolments – 2009*. Wellington: Tertiary Sector Performance Analysis and Reporting, Strategy and System Performance, Ministry of Education.

11 Ibid.

A 2011 Ministry of Education report noted a 3 percent increase in total international student enrolments between 2009 and 2010.¹² In 2010, approximately 68 percent of these students were from Asia, the majority (22 percent) from the People's Republic of China (PRC), followed by South Korea (16 percent), India (12 percent), Japan (10 percent), and South East Asia (9 percent).¹³

The Immigration Survey Monitoring Programme monitors new and temporary migrants, including students and graduates on work permits. The 2009 survey¹⁴ sampled 288 international students, a number comparable with the combined Phase One survey and interview participants.

Although the Immigration Survey Monitoring Programme included students and graduates from many countries, not just those within Asia, its findings generally echoed our Phase One findings – that is, that many students and graduates wished to gain PR and work in New Zealand after graduating. However, while most students intended to apply for PR, only a small number made the transition to residence. This was despite projections for long-term labour force needs in New Zealand for employees with Asia-related knowledge and skills.¹⁵

Studies have suggested that employer attitudes or ignorance may contribute to Asian people's under employment and unemployment in New Zealand.¹⁶ In their New Zealand study, Campbell and Li (2009) found that, in comparison with 'local' job applicants, prospective employers perceived 'migrant' applicants as having difficulties in oral communication, limited knowledge of New Zealand culture, and lack of experience with behavioural interviews. Campbell and Li suggested that as well as providing explicit skills' teaching for migrants, there was a need for recruitment consultants to adopt educative roles with some highly prejudiced employers.

12 Ministry of Education. (2011). *International Enrolments in New Zealand 2004-2010*. Wellington: International Division, Ministry of Education.

13 Ibid.

14 Merwood, P., and Wilkinson, A. (2010). *Key Findings from the Migrants Survey: 2009 migrants survey (pilot)*. Wellington: Department of Labour. Available from: <http://www.dol.govt.nz/publications/research/migrants-survey2009-key-findings/migrants-survey2009-key-findings.pdf>

15 Badkar, J., and Tuya, C. (2010). *The Asian Workforce: A critical part of New Zealand's current and future labour market*. Wellington: Department of Labour: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2007). *Our Future with Asia (Asia white paper)*. Wellington: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Available from: <http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Media-and-publications/Publications/Asia-White-Paper/index.php>

16 Campbell, J., & Li, M. (2009). Placing migrants in employment: Recruitment consultants' experiences. In P. S. Morrison (Ed.), *Labour, Employment and Work in New Zealand: Proceedings of the thirteenth Conference 11-12 December 2008* (pp. 126-132). Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington: Department of Labour. (2009). *New Faces, New Futures: New Zealand – findings from the Longitudinal Immigration Survey: New Zealand (LisNZ) – wave one*. Wellington: Department of Labour.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

Throughout the study, our primary methods of data collection have been online surveys and in-depth interviews. Eligible participants have included all Asia-born students in their final years of study at New Zealand business schools or in their first years after graduation.

Phase One participants were recruited from late 2008 to early 2009 through:

- participating business schools (by referral and through posters in Chinese and English publicising the study);
- International Student Ministries of New Zealand staff and student clubs and networks; and
- peer referral.

All were invited to participate in the survey and interviews, and five chose to participate in both. The initial online survey went live in March 2009.

A total of 131 students and new graduates completed the first survey, exceeding our target number of 120. This increased by 40 once the initial data collection was complete. Interviews for Phase One were conducted with 40 people between October 2008 and May 2009 (this number subsequently increased to 50). The first report has an in-depth account of the Phase One research methods and findings.

After Phase One we maintained contact with participants through newsletters, updating them on the study's progress and preliminary findings. We also provided all participants with links to our initial online report.

In late 2009 we invited all Phase One participants to take part in Phase Two. We expected some attrition in both the survey and interviews as graduates moved from study to work and, in some cases, adjusted to living in new places or returned to their countries of origin. The number of interview participants dropped from 50 to 31 and the number of participants in the survey from 171 to 45, despite an increase in participation incentives. However, Phase Two participants provided us with information-rich qualitative data for our second report.

We attempted to reduce further participant attrition during Phase Three by increasing incentives, seeking further referrals and simplifying the survey (in response to Phase One and Two participant suggestions). Despite our efforts the survey participants dropped to 14; however, responses again provided us with in-depth, information-rich data.

The number of interview participants also reduced, and interview-based data collection was difficult in the aftermath of the Christchurch and Japan earthquakes. Many interviews had to be rescheduled after these events.

After a considerable delay, we conducted Phase Three interviews with 27 participants, of whom 14 had been interviewed in all three phases, 11 were new to the project, one had been interviewed during phases one and three, and one during phases two and three. Our Phase Three report is largely informed by these interviews, with supplementary data included from participants' survey responses where these add to, complicate or contradict interview findings.

During Phase One and Two data collection and in discussions after the release of our first two reports, our research team had received a number of suggestions for new avenues of enquiry. As a result we conducted Phase Three interviews with 10 (non-graduate) stakeholders in policy, education and business, and consulted a variety of others on issues raised in the Phase One and Two reports. Where appropriate we include comments from these interviews in this report, identifying them as 'observer' comments to distinguish them from participant responses.

The Phase Three survey and interviews were designed and carried out in a similar way to those in our first and second reports. Specifically, they:

- re-examined graduates' current occupations, the nature of their current work (if employed), its relevance to their business qualifications, their general perspectives on life after graduation, and whether (and in what ways) their earlier expectations had been realised, modified or put on hold; and
- asked participants to comment on their ongoing connections with New Zealand and New Zealanders, perspectives on their business qualifications and career pathways, and insights into their likely contributions to New Zealand-Asia business relationships.

The survey was simple and short, combining five-point Likert scale responses with open comment boxes. As in Phases One and Two, the interviews were semi-structured, with interviewees encouraged to talk freely about their experiences and views.

The rest of this report has a similar structure to our previous report. We:

- provide a demographic overview of all participants, and Phase Three participants in particular;
- outline six post-graduation pathways, including a 'new' category identified in Phase Three;
- consider the factors that participants perceived as helping or hindering their efforts to find work in relation to the Phase Two findings;
- discuss participants' views of their business and personal connections and experiences, changed and changing expectations of the future, and ongoing Asia-New Zealand connections; and
- discuss the Phase Three findings in relation to project findings as a whole; and
- suggest some recommendations for policy, research and practice.

3. PHASE THREE RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Figure 1 illustrates the changing number of participants in our surveys and interviews during the three-year study. As in Phases One and Two, Phase Three participants represented all levels of tertiary study, from diploma to doctoral. Their countries of origin broadly paralleled those in available statistics on Asian international students, with PRC-born students dominating in both surveys and interviews (Figure 2).¹⁷

Figure 1

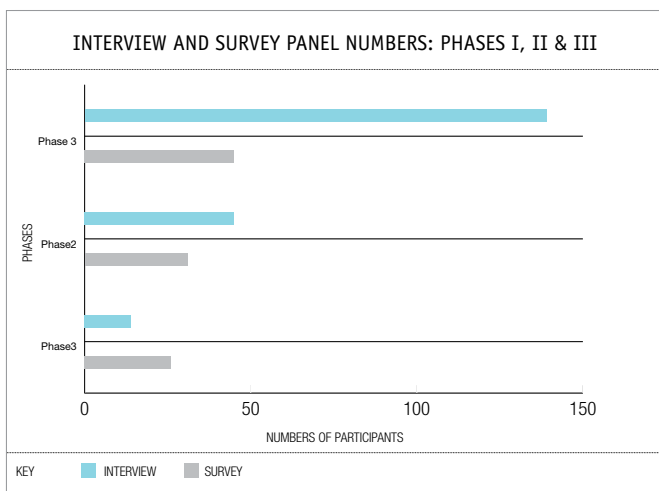
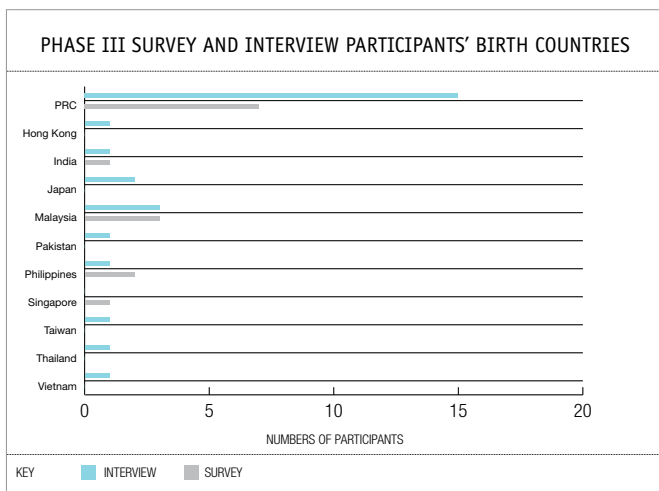


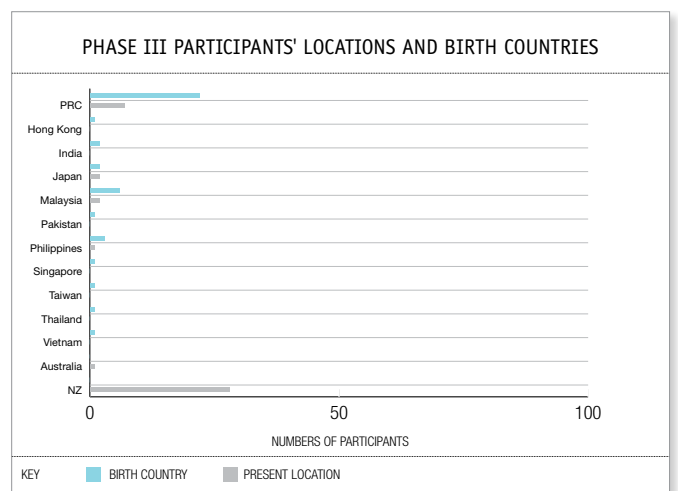
Figure 2



A greater proportion of Phase Three participants had moved away from their initial study locations than during the study's first two phases. Some had left New Zealand and some had moved within New Zealand. Difficulties in contacting or eliciting their continued participation were often due to the transitional demands associated with adjusting to new or demanding jobs and previous home or new living environments.

More survey and interview participants were living outside New Zealand, and more had returned to their birth countries, than in Phases One and Two (see Figure 3).

Figure 3



During Phase Three only four participants were still studying. All postgraduate students, one was a PhD student who had been an interviewee since Phase One, and the other three had returned to study after either looking for work or working for a while.

The Phase Three participants included 20 males and 21 females (with 13 males and 14 females interviewed). During Phase Three data collection, 28 participants were living in New Zealand, 11 in their birth countries, and two in other countries in Asia (see Figure 3).

¹⁷ Most international students identifying as 'Asian' in New Zealand tertiary education institutions are from PRC, at just over 43 percent (see http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary_education/participation). It's impossible to comment on how the birth countries of our Phase two participants reflect the birth countries of Asia-born business students generally, since no combined statistics on (New Zealand and international) business students' countries of birth are available.

A considerably smaller proportion of participants were unemployed during Phase Three than in Phase Two – a reduction from 16 out of 76 to two out of 41. Although at face value this is a positive finding, the Phase Three figure should be read with caution as the high attrition levels during the study may indicate much higher levels of unemployment among participants overall. Although our evidence is anecdotal rather than empirical, we suspect that some participants left the study to avoid sharing disappointing results with ‘strangers’.¹⁸

REVISITING PHASE TWO POST-GRADUATION PATHWAYS

The five post-graduation pathways identified in Phase Two have been modified and expanded in response to the Phase Three interviews, in which graduates identified seven pathways:

- New Zealand-based degree-related employment;
- overseas-based degree-related employment;
- New Zealand-based part-time or temporary employment;
- overseas-based part-time or temporary employment;
- unemployment, searching for New Zealand-based employment;
- unemployment, searching for overseas-based employment; and
- postgraduate study.

NEW ZEALAND-BASED DEGREE-RELATED EMPLOYMENT

In our Phase Two interviews, seven of the 19 New Zealand-based interviewees had gained work in New Zealand that was clearly related to their tertiary qualifications and that exemplified the wide-ranging pathways open to business graduates. All were graduates of New Zealand universities who had obtained Bachelor-level degrees or higher.

Their reasons for staying in New Zealand included:

- they had obtained work;
- they were in new relationships;
- the competitive nature of their ‘home’ countries’ job markets; and
- the difficult demands of their ‘home’ countries’ work environments.

Some also commented on the current economic situation in relation to difficulties finding work (or ‘ideal’ jobs) in New Zealand and elsewhere.

Some New Zealand-based employees described their current work as ‘not ideal’ or in their ideal fields. For example, David mentioned that he’d wanted to find a management-level job or establish his own hospitality business. When interviewed he was working as a pizza chef in a restaurant and bar.

A number of Phase Two interviewees commented that having connections and building relationships were important in gaining degree-related work in New Zealand. They also commented on the value of work experience, with some describing it as more important than a degree for work purposes.

This view was reiterated by some Phase Three interviewees. For example, Daisy was still working for an intellectual disability service provider despite her earlier business aspirations. She commented that she’d applied for a human resources job between her Phase Two and Three interviews but had been unsuccessful owing to a lack of work experience.

Three Phase Three interviewees (Jing Xia, Lerk Ling and Joy) said that successful entrepreneurialism within New Zealand had provided alternative pathways to getting work. This entrepreneurialism took different forms, including owning a takeaway store, starting an online shop and owning/renting out properties in New Zealand and Malaysia. It also took different approaches. For example, Jing Xia had gone “for many interviews” and not been successful, so had decided to start a small “trading business.” However, for Joy (the owner of the takeaway store), entrepreneurialism provided an additional revenue stream alongside her ‘full-time’ job with a dairy company.

¹⁸ Butcher, A. (2002). A grief observed: Grief experiences of East Asian students returning to their countries of origin, *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 6(4), 354-368.

Phase Three interviewees saw language skills as an important contributor to successful employment in New Zealand: both English-language proficiency and the capacity to communicate with Asian businesses. In her Phase Three interview, Yee Phang commented that, for one of her previous jobs in New Zealand, “the reason I was chosen for the job was my ability to communicate with the Chinese suppliers of the company”. For Yee Phang and some other interviewees, bi- or multi-linguistic capabilities provided social capital¹⁹ that made them unique contributors to specific New Zealand or overseas-based employment opportunities.²⁰

Phase Three interviewees also identified PR status as opening up New Zealand-based employment possibilities. An unemployed interviewee, Ron, said that his “qualification was not delivering what was expected. It’s a stepping-stone to stay in New Zealand. Getting PR is the real thing, then job and working qualification is secondary”. Another interviewee, Sherry, noted, “Many companies are not willing to go through the hassle of applying for a work visa for a non-resident applicant like myself.”

OVERSEAS-BASED DEGREE-RELATED EMPLOYMENT

Three Phase Two interviewees had obtained permanent, full-time work outside New Zealand that was related to their New Zealand qualifications. By Phase Three, 13 participants (nine interviewees and four survey participants) had found work outside New Zealand. While most were working in their birth countries, a Malaysian graduate was working in Australia and a Taiwanese graduate in PRC.

As was the case for some New Zealand-based employees (see the previous section), some of those working in their birth countries described their jobs as “not ideal” or outside their specific fields of interest. Yukiko, a Japan-based interviewee, identified a “flexible attitude” (or openness to “non-ideal” work) as helping to achieve successful job search results:

“I wanted to do a job I wanted or liked but the reality was not so simple. I could not find any such job... So I changed my mind to apply for a job even in an area in which I was not interested or to obtain another skill. Now I recognise the importance of a flexible attitude and am satisfied with what I could obtain from the attitude change.”

¹⁹ For a definition of social capital, Statistics New Zealand (2002). *The Measurement of Social Capital in New Zealand*, see page 3. Unpublished paper presented at the International Conference on Social Capital Measurement, London 25-27 September.

²⁰ For an example of an application of social capital relevant to this study, see page 47, Lindsay, V., Shaw, V., Beal, T., Cone, M., McLean, F., Rod, M., and Ashill, N. (2011). *Service Success in Asia*, Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington and Ministry of Science and Innovation.

The reasons for seeking Asia-based work included both ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors:

- ‘push’ factors included an inability to find degree-related work in New Zealand, unsuccessful PR or work visa applications, a lack of financial resources in New Zealand, and disillusionment with the work-residence process; and
- ‘pull’ factors included a perception of Asia-based companies as offering broader employment opportunities, a lack of immigration barriers, family connections and commitments, and scholarship ‘bond’ commitments.

Phase Three interviewees in Asia-based employment reiterated the importance of work experience and many noted that employers valued their English-language skills. Some commented on the long work hours and/or commuting requirements associated with their work, and noted some difficulty in moving from a ‘relaxed’ student life in New Zealand to employment in Asia.

NEW ZEALAND-BASED TEMPORARY, PART-TIME OR VOLUNTEER WORK

Seven Phase Two interview participants had been engaged in temporary, part-time or volunteer work in New Zealand. While their accounts were characterised by a sense of waiting, and in some cases frustration, they also revealed the participants’ creative responsiveness to discrepancies between career expectations and actual work situations.

The extent to which participants valued their temporary, part-time or volunteer work depended on how much they felt that it:

- provided a pathway to more permanent employment;
- provided opportunities to use or add to their skills; and/or
- fitted their personal aspirations.

By Phase Three there was some evidence of movement, with some having moved from temporary to full-time New Zealand-based employment or returned to their birth countries and found employment. John had been working as a volunteer during Phase Two and had hoped that the position would become permanent. During Phase Three we found John in another city in permanent full-time work, made possible because his employer had supported him through the process of obtaining an ongoing work visa.

OVERSEAS-BASED TEMPORARY OR PART-TIME WORK

Two Phase Two interviewees had obtained overseas-based work (in Asia) that was either part time or temporary. Like those working in temporary or part-time roles in New Zealand, their work satisfaction depended on their personal aspirations.

For one Phase Three interviewee, Wen Bing, temporary employment was something to do while she searched for permanent work. She had a volunteer job in the field of sculpture, unrelated to her degree. Wen Bing saw her position as a “stepping stone” to future employment, stating that it would “help in getting to know people and also [allow me to] practise communication.” This echoes Phase Two interviewees’ emphasis on the importance of establishing networks and connections to gain access to “ideal” employment in New Zealand or Asia.

UNEMPLOYMENT, SEARCHING FOR NEW ZEALAND-BASED EMPLOYMENT

Four Phase Two interviewees were unemployed: Ron, Rachel, Mei Ling and Wei Xiong. All were former international students, originally from PRC.

By the time of their Phase Three interviews they had all gained PR status, and all but Ron had found paid work. Ron commented, “[It’s] hard to be looking for any kind of job nowadays. Want to look for any work just to get a job reference. I need work to be seen as capable in the workplace. Any work will do for a start but employers don’t seem too interested.” Ron stated that his (PRC-based) parents were supporting him financially, and that he was contemplating further study.

Participants at all three phases highlighted immigration issues (such as communication on visas and PR applications, and application-processing times) as shaping their employment decisions and results. For several participants, immigration issues were a significant barrier to finding work in New Zealand.

During Phases One and Two, some interviewees expressed concern at the one-year limit on the Graduate Work Search Permit. During Phase Three, several also commented on the time restrictions of work visas and difficulties in applying for PR. Although Ron was the only New Zealand-based unemployed interviewee at the time, some other interviewees had left New Zealand after immigration-related issues were barriers to employment.

For example, Wei Bi had been employed in a role that INZ deemed unrelated to his degree, and returned to PRC after his work visa application was declined. Wei Bi had originally wanted to work in New Zealand, but changed his mind owing to his frustration with the visa application process. He commented, “I did not expect complicated, time-consuming immigration checks,” and noted that job offers were hard to come by without PR status: “I found it hard to get job and had no residency. If don’t have PR, can’t get a job”.

UNEMPLOYMENT, ACTIVELY SEEKING OVERSEAS-BASED EMPLOYMENT

Three Phase Three interviewees were unemployed and actively searching for work in their birth countries.

Wen Bing, who was hoping to find work in Shanghai, reiterated Phase Two participants’ emphasis on the dual importance of a relevant degree and connections for obtaining suitable employment. She commented, “I don’t have any network in Shanghai. I am scared to be in such a huge city. I think foreign company will be better.”

Like many Phase Two returnees and Phase Three Asia-based employed participants (see above), both Wen Bing and Jing Xia (another PRC-based returnee) emphasised the value of English-language proficiency to Asia-based employers. Both expressed a hope that English-language proficiency would provide them with a competitive advantage in PRC.

POSTGRADUATE STUDY

Several Phase One and Two interviewees were considering further or postgraduate study, in some cases to “buy time” after unsuccessful work visa applications and with the aim of PR status. By Phase Three, four were undertaking postgraduate study.

Ahmed, a Pakistan-born student, described himself as about halfway through his PhD studies. He commented on both positive and negative experiences in New Zealand, and:

- noted that his studies and part-time university tutoring work had enabled him to become more familiar with New Zealand’s culture, but described some difficulties in building close relationships with New Zealanders at his university beyond the formal student-supervisor connections;
- highlighted a need for more proactive inclusivity in New Zealand university environments, and described the contrast between the “strong emphasis on diversity” in his daughters’ (New Zealand) school and a perception that “Kiwi students” at university level did not mix with others; and
- mentioned conference attendance as an approach he had taken to try to build the connections he needed to access post-graduation opportunities.

EMPLOYMENT-ASSISTING FACTORS

During Phase Three we explored the four key factors identified in Phase Two as helping graduates to find work:

- volunteer or other work experience;
- social connections;
- personal attributes (including meaningful qualifications, experience, communication skills, English-language proficiency, confidence and effort); and
- relevant job search support or career guidance.

The following is a summary of the advice Phase Two and Three graduates would offer to prospective Asia-born, New Zealand-educated business graduates and job seekers:²¹

1. Try to gain work experience – qualifications are not enough.
 - Internships provide practical experience, insights into work environments and information on which to base decisions about future work options.
 - Gain paid work while studying, even if you don’t need the money. Work experience looks good on your CV and provides useful contacts and (ideally) employer recommendations. This increases your chances of success. Many New Zealand employers value young people who are willing to work even if the work seems ‘menial’ or unrelated to their qualifications.
2. Engage with life in New Zealand: volunteer; take part in student clubs, societies and community groups.
 - Involve yourself in part-time work, volunteering and community education courses that provide opportunities to interact and connect with locals.
 - Get involved in student association activities, as they can help you to build confidence and experience in speaking with people in diverse contexts and situations where good performance is vital. Get involved in competitions (business, debating, sports and cultural) so you gain experience in working with and organising others and in teamwork, project management, etc.
3. Try to understand the job market.
 - If you’re a newcomer to New Zealand and want to work in New Zealand, gather as much information as you can about the local job market as soon as you arrive (or before your arrival). In particular, investigate immigration ‘skill shortage’ areas and visa application requirements. If you plan to return ‘home’ or move elsewhere, research the job market in the country/ies to which you plan to move. If you’re uncertain about where you’ll work, look for shifting developments in your country/ies of interest.

²¹ Advice similar to this is readily available on some university and careers websites. For example, see: www.business.auckland.ac.nz/ua/home/for/current-students/career-centre1/make-yourself-more-employable.

4. Develop networks.

- Join professional associations related to your field of study and attend events they host so that you can meet and network with prospective employers and colleagues.
- Contact and visit companies relevant to your field of interest while you're still studying. Go to exhibitions, shows and conferences to learn about your field and to network.
- Maintain contact with friends and work to make new (including 'local') friends. Social connections can be useful when you're looking for work.

5. Use your distinctiveness as an international graduate to your advantage.

- Know that your linguistic and cross-cultural skills and your international awareness and experience set you apart.
- Highlight your skills on your CV, including if you're bi- or multi-lingual or have experience moving between contexts and working across cultural differences.
- Understand that the ability to communicate cross-culturally and shift between different contexts or worldviews demonstrates flexibility and relational skills that are integral to excellent business relationships.

6. Identify and develop skills that are likely to make you employable.

- Identify and hone your presentation, communication and research skills. These skills are highly transferable. Show that you're willing to take on challenges and engage in 'risk-taking' activities.
- When applying for project management roles, show that you are well organised and have excellent presentation, communication, interpersonal and team leadership skills. You may need to begin in a low-level position and work towards managerial roles over time.

7. Be flexible.

- New Zealand and multinational employers value people's flexibility and the ability to engage readily in a wide range of tasks.
- Be able to demonstrate that you have wider interests and skills than your specific field of study.
- Be motivated by what you want to do, not by what you must do – follow your instincts.
- Develop a good work/life balance as this will help you to develop in your career and as a person.
- Understand that the 'ideal' job may be difficult to find, especially if you're a new graduate. To achieve your dreams you may need to take unexpected job opportunities. Any employment is a chance to prove yourself and may lead to other job opportunities. Sometimes unanticipated employment pathways are surprisingly satisfying.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS

Phase Two and Three participants highlighted the roles of relationships and networks in helping to achieve positive results in the labour market.

While top graduates with highly regarded degree-level or postgraduate qualifications generally found jobs, many graduates found employment through serendipitous connections, family connections and/or work that was initially part time or unpaid (voluntary).

This reiterates the New Zealand Longitudinal Immigration Survey finding that "getting a job through friends or relatives was the most common way for Business... category... migrants to find work".²² Notably, although our findings are suggestive, the relationship between social networks and employment has not yet been fully explored in New Zealand migrant research.

²² From International Migration, Settlement and Employment Dynamics. *Fast Facts 6: Employment outcomes for permanent migrants*. Wellington: Department of Labour. Available from: <http://www.immigration.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/891FA90B-ACCB-4B53-8F2F-3306C7C126E5/0/DOL1070521LisNZFastFacts6Employmentoutcomes.pdf> (accessed 22 August 2011), p. 2.

THE NEED FOR RESPONSIVE AND RELEVANT CAREERS ADVICE

The Phase Two report identified the importance of job search support and career guidance.

Like Phase Two graduates, many Phase Three participants commented on:

- the brevity of career advice appointments at their respective educational institutions;
- a sense of career advisers having little interest in them as people with unique employment interests and needs;
- a lack of information about how to look for work; and
- an apparent preference for providing services to the 'best graduates' only.

Wen Bing and Paula at Phase Two and Rachel at Phase Three suggested that educational institutions' focus on "high-level jobs/big companies" did not "match with new graduates".

Our observer echoed this observation. Fred, who has experience in helping job seekers to find work, observed that career service providers often have few connections with employers and are limited in their responsiveness to graduates' prospective work environments. He also noted that:

- attempts are rarely made to help graduates identify their relevant generic skills;
- there is little training for students in how they should apply for, prepare for and present themselves well in interviews;
- career advisers rarely provide enough help to students during their job searches;
- advisers tend to provide advice rather than practical job search support; and
- many job seekers benefit from support and practical help throughout the process, and international graduates are no exception.

Reflecting on his own experiences as a former Asian international student, another observer (James) said that some Asian graduates are uncomfortable in New Zealand workplaces if they don't understand particular workplace behaviours. James's view was that career guidance services aiming to help recent Asian migrants should focus not only on job search assistance but also on facilitating successful workplace integration. He suggested that role-play-based training in workplace language, behaviour and communication might equip international graduates to engage socially with New Zealanders in a variety of 'Kiwi' environments.

IMMIGRATION-RELATED EFFECTS

The Phase One and Two reports discussed New Zealand's immigration-related processes and how these might affect graduates' transitions to work.

Phase One participants were generally very satisfied with these processes, but by Phase Two this satisfaction had declined in conjunction with graduates' concerns about looming visa deadlines. Some seemed unprepared for complex work and PR visa application requirements, particularly when they required support from employers or potential employers.

Phase Two and Three participants suggested three factors that could contribute to graduates' apparent unpreparedness for post-graduation immigration-related processes:

- the relative ease of renewing student visas while studying;²³
- unrealistic expectations of their qualifications' desirability or 'currency' in the New Zealand job market; and
- a lack of relevant and accurate information early in the decision-making process.

Participants indicated that they found it difficult to accept the dynamic nature of immigration policy and practice. Some felt the conditions for permanent migration (such as sought after skills) pertaining at commencement of a course, under a study permit, should remain in force when exiting the study permit at course completion.

The Phase One report highlighted how graduates' study-to-work transitions were less linear than current immigration processes might have recognised. We recommended flexibility in policy and practice in relation to graduate visas, in order to broaden graduates' work experience options and recognise their long-term value to New Zealand as skilled Asia- and New Zealand-literate migrants with unique expertise. The Phase Two report included further recommendations on immigration processes to reflect participants' perceptions of a lack of information and assistance services.

We note that Immigration New Zealand provides on-campus 'Study to Residence' workshops in cooperation with some universities. However, none of our research participants reported knowing about such events, perhaps because they had not been held in their educational institutions, or because they failed to receive (or notice) information about them. Our study suggests that INZ needs to continue working with educational institutions to ensure that international graduates are fully informed about New Zealand immigration policy and immigration-related issues.

²³ See Figure 7, page 13, McGrath et al. (2009).

During Phase Three, immigration processes emerged as both causing frustration and creating a barrier to employment for some graduates. Among the 27 Phase Three interviewees, five had PR, six preferred not to comment on INZ-related experiences, and six described negative experiences interacting with INZ. As noted, we don't have a complete picture of our participants' experiences of immigration processes, as we suspect that attrition may partly reflect unsuccessful visa applications and graduates' forced return 'home'. However, some specific Phase Three interviews were instructive.

Wei Bi's application for a work visa had been unsuccessful despite his finding employment that he saw as 'degree related'. When interviewed he was expecting to return to PRC or seek work in Australia. Wei Bi's account exemplifies the frustration of several graduates in their dealings with INZ while simultaneously trying to find work. Reflecting on the visa application process, Wei Bi recalled:

[It was a] terrible experience. I had job in logistics for a large supermarket but couldn't get a long-term visa or PR as degree in business is not considered a logistics qualification. The manager was mad at me. He was keen to keep me but I was not on a long-term visa.

Wei Bi also linked his frustration with the fact that he had left a "good job" in PRC to study and live in New Zealand, and noted that his visa application attempts had not been helped by his (New Zealand) employer's reluctance to become involved in the application process. Wei Bi felt he had been lured under false pretences to study in New Zealand as an international student. He highlighted the risk that a mismatch between attractive marketing and complex realities may leave graduates feeling angry, disenfranchised and ill-disposed towards New Zealand:

Applying for New Zealand [student] visa appeared to be the most easy but after come here it became complicated and additional checks, health checks etc. This is a trap. If known, I would have applied for Australia... I will say this back in China... Other Chinese students feel the same and are pissed off.²⁴

Two interviewees showed how supportive assistance can help to achieve successful visa applications. The first (Thi Diep) received advice and encouragement from one of our interviewers, and the second (John) received his employer's targeted support. Thi Diep showed our interviewer an INZ letter, the tone of which she felt was decidedly pointed, negative and indicative of the visa being declined. Our interviewer encouraged her to ignore the perceived tone, to respond warmly and positively to the direct requests for information, and to provide full answers, including providing supporting evidence where required.

A few weeks later Thi Diep informed our interviewer that her visa had been granted and thanked him for his understanding and encouragement. Having had a successful result, she felt less negative about her initial interactions with INZ. Thi Diep's experience suggests that, for quality assurance purposes, future in-depth qualitative research is needed that examines recipients' perceptions of and responses to routine letters from INZ.

In contrast to Wei Bi's experience, John commented positively on his employer's support as helping him with a successful visa application despite some difficulties with the process:

[I had a] supportive boss. I had lots of hassles with application process. They called my boss to verify. I am the third international person in the company and my boss had to submit his accounts for verification as well. He felt like he was on the spot and under a microscope. I am grateful for his endurance. Boss was great as he has had experiences with Asians working before.

Alongside Wei Bi's account, John's comments suggest the importance of INZ working proactively with employers and professional networks to facilitate employer knowledge about their role in supporting employees' visa application processes.

²⁴ For a full discussion of the risks inherent in perpetuating a mismatch between marketing promises and reality for international students, see: Wesley, M. (2009). *Australia's Poisoned Alumni: International education and the costs to Australia, a policy brief*. Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy. <http://www.Lowyinstitute.Org/publication.Asp?Pid=1103>

FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON NEW ZEALAND BUSINESS QUALIFICATIONS

The Phase Two graduates generally rated their New Zealand business qualifications very highly. However, they expressed some concerns about:

- the applicability of business course content to 'real-world' contexts and contexts outside New Zealand;
- the limited internship opportunities;
- the non-applicability of some degree programmes to graduate-level positions (for example management); and
- employers' desire for experience as well as qualifications.

Most of the Phase Three participants were working or searching for work. When asked to reflect on their New Zealand business qualifications, they reiterated a view that employers are interested in graduates with practical experience and an ability to relate well in work environments, rather than qualifications per se.²⁵ Nine graduates (all former international students) commented that students' English-language proficiency should be developed throughout their business courses, specifically their skills and confidence in spoken English (including public speaking) and in business-related writing.

One Phase Three graduate, Wen Bing, reflected on her own lack of preparedness for work in comparison with her polytechnic-educated colleagues. She observed that "polytechnic is more practical and... university more theoretical," and that as a university graduate she had needed to work harder and for longer hours than her colleagues to become proficient in some practical procedures. Many Phase Three participants echoed Wen Bing's recommendation that New Zealand business programmes cover both practical and theoretical content and promote work experience opportunities.

Participants in all three phases suggested a range of ways in which students could add practical experience to their business programmes, such as through:

- doing part-time work while studying;
- volunteering;
- undertaking internships;
- selecting courses with practical placements; and
- getting involved in students' associations and clubs.

As noted, graduates said that practical and interactive experiences could enable students to develop the communication, organisational, leadership and social skills needed to help them function well in the workplace.

Although many students noted the value of developing a wide range of skills through practical experience outside their business programmes, opportunities to learn and hone such skills should arguably also be provided within business programmes. James (an observer) commented that practical experience is crucial if 'newcomers' wishing to 'do business' in New Zealand (as in any new context) are to build an understanding of how 'locals' work.

We suggest that as all students are newcomers to business and many are newcomers to work, explicit skills' teaching and practical experience could be usefully incorporated into business programmes for the benefit of all students, not just new or prospective migrants.²⁶

²⁵ See the discussion on factors likely to influence employee selection in Hawthorne, L. (2011). *Competing for Skills: Migration policies and trends in New Zealand and Australia. Full Report*. Wellington: Department of Labour, on page 157.

²⁶ For a full discussion of 'internationalisation' and curriculum development, see Haigh, M. J. (2002). Internationalisation of the curriculum: Designing inclusive education for a small world. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 26(1), 49-66.

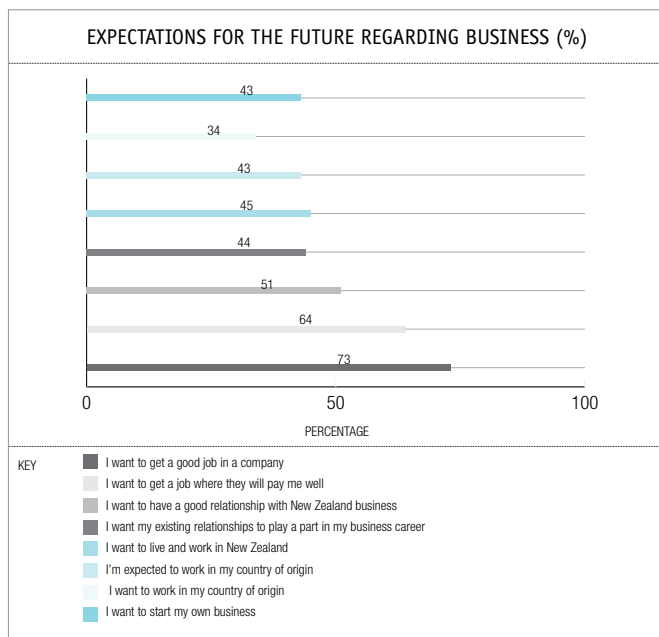
CONNECTIONS

As in the earlier phases, during Phase Three we were interested in graduates' roles in developing and maintaining Asia-New Zealand business relationships, and how they imagined the possibilities in this area. Participants alluded to both business and interpersonal connections. Although these were not necessarily distinct from each other, we discuss them separately below.

Business connections

In Phase One survey participants expressed a strong interest in gaining 'good' or 'well paid' jobs after graduation, and an openness to future business involvements and connections with New Zealand (Figure 4).

Figure 4²⁷



Almost half of the Phase One participants stated that they wanted to live and work in New Zealand, and a similar number had entrepreneurial aspirations. Alongside these expectations, more than half of the Phase One participants indicated a desire to have good relationships with New Zealand businesses.

Phase Two graduates had a more concrete sense of how they could contribute to the development of Asia-New Zealand business relationships.²⁸

In Phase Three we examined how these business relationships were continuing to develop, noting emerging examples of graduates who were already involved in developing Asia-New Zealand business connections, and graduates' ideas about their future roles in developing such relationships.

Phase Three graduates who were already involved or seriously considering an involvement in Asia-New Zealand business relationships fell into three broad categories:

- those with interests in Asia or New Zealand-based import-export businesses;
- those interested in property investment in New Zealand and Asia; and
- those with interests in service industries that required some kind of New Zealand-Asia connection.

We elaborate on each of these categories below. Since the graduates involved are highly identifiable, we outline their work generally rather than specifically.

Import-export business

A group of graduates were working as distributors in South East Asia for a New Zealand sports equipment manufacturer with whom they had developed a relationship while studying. Several interviewed were considering importing New Zealand products into Asian countries and Asian products into New Zealand. Export products of interest included leather hides, minerals, milk powder and wine to PRC; natural health supplements to East Asia; and chocolate and other luxury dairy products to Thailand. Import products of interest included clothing from Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand; and European and South East Asian food products.

Property investment

Several graduates had interests in property investment, with some already owning houses in New Zealand. One had successfully developed a property investment business alongside her "paid" employment with a New Zealand company. At the time of writing, her property portfolio included investments in New Zealand and Malaysia, and she was investigating additional property investment opportunities in Australia and Singapore. Notably, this graduate identified her interest in property investment as having been sparked early in her New Zealand business programme.

²⁷ This figure is taken from McGrath et al. (2009), p. 16.

²⁸ See McGrath et al. (2011), p. 17.

Service industries

Graduates were involved in three service industries with an Asia-New Zealand connection: tourism, international education and Asia-New Zealand business consultancy.

One graduate was considering promoting 'dental tourism' from New Zealand to an Asian country; another had organised inbound tourism in association with international education; a third was involved in arranging for international students to enter a local high school; and a fourth was an agent for a New Zealand designer exploring manufacturing possibilities in Vietnam.

A Japanese graduate working in Japan spoke of helping to settle New Zealanders into Japan. At the time of her interview, she expressed the hope that her company would use her to facilitate other overseas links. This graduate had developed a small list of products available in New Zealand that she regarded as better than similar ones in Japan. When interviewed, she was scoping importation, marketing and distribution possibilities.

Another Japanese returnee working in banking spoke of his dual desire to "introduce Japanese people to New Zealand" and to send Japanese bank workers to train in New Zealand as an alternative to their current training destinations (the USA and Shanghai).

Participants wishing to start their own businesses (see Figure 4, page 19) had done so both within and outside Asia-New Zealand connections. One example was Joy, a graduate employed in a large New Zealand company, which coincidentally had a significant Asia-New Zealand aspect. Joy had purchased a takeaway business and, by the time of her Phase Three interview, employed two people. Her primary aim was to build capital with a view to buying a higher-value business. Joy explained that she had chosen to begin with a takeaway business as this had low start-up costs and suited her limited capital.

Other graduates spoke of similar desires. Food businesses seemed to be popular 'first business' choices, perhaps because many students had worked in food businesses owned by migrants and were familiar with how they operated, and/or such businesses required relatively low capital input at the outset.

However, there were a number of deterrents to starting a small business in New Zealand. These included:

- visa regulations, as starting a small business is currently not permitted as a source of primary employment unless PR has been granted;
- difficulty convincing family members to contribute start-up capital when graduates were new to business and geographically distant from senior family members.
- New Zealand banking practices' start-up assistance is not readily available to people with temporary visa status and limited access to guarantors.

Phase Two and Three New Zealand-based graduates expressed many business ideas but few had progressed to the start-up stage.

Some graduates who had returned to Asia or were considering doing so discussed possibilities for starting businesses "at home". They had some concerns about having been absent from social networks and noted that although access to family capital could help them with starting new Asia-based businesses, control would remain largely with senior family members.

One PRC-born graduate, David, mentioned that his family contacts were currently considering investing in three business options:

- a fusion food café business in New Zealand with some supply from PRC;
- distributing New Zealand baby milk powder through family businesses in the PRC; and
- distributing other New Zealand high-value food products through family business networks across the Asia region (for example, salmon to Japan and mushrooms to Hong Kong).

Observer James highlighted the potential value of Asia-born students' familial connections to New Zealand businesses. He noted that 'doing business' in many Asian countries requires the development of mutually trusting relationships over time,²⁹ based on recognition of mutual benefit.

29 For a discussion about *Guan xi* (relationships built on mutual trust) and *Guan lian* (relationships built on mutual relevance), McGrath, T., Stock, P., and Butcher, A. (2007). *Friends and Allies: The impacts of returning Asian students on New Zealand-Asia relationships*. Wellington: Asia New Zealand Foundation, see page 16.

James described an Asian business graduate he knew who could only find employment at a petrol station, despite “good qualifications” (a law degree from China and a business degree from New Zealand), “good grades”, a desire to start a business in New Zealand and access to large amounts of family investment capital. James observed that in Asia, the graduate’s family connections would have been of great interest to potential employers, and suggested the importance of New Zealand companies recognising the value of graduates’ social capital (their social knowledge, connections, and familial and other social networks) as a basis for developing trusting and potentially influential relationships long term.

One Phase Three participant stands out as having an employer who recognised her Asia-based connections as an asset. Yee Phang (a PRC-born PR) had been chosen for her former job with a New Zealand-based company because she was able to communicate with Asian suppliers and because of her family connections in Hong Kong and South China (including with high-ranking government officials).

Interpersonal connections

Throughout this study we have sought graduates’ views on remaining connected with New Zealand and New Zealanders.

The Phase Three findings were similar to those of Phases One and Two, in that most graduates wanted to stay connected with local and international friends, lecturers, former home-stay parents. Phase Three participants who were required to leave New Zealand owing to ‘failed’ visa applications (for example, Wei Bi) still spoke highly of their New Zealand friends. Notably, two to three years out from graduation, many graduates still said they intended to maintain contact with business lecturers and academic supervisors.

Participants in all phases expressed views typical of Asian international students in the wider education sector. Many had difficulty making New Zealand friends, and most of their friends were co-nationals or co-internationals.³⁰ Where they had made “Kiwi” friends, the social connections had strong elements of mutual regard and trust. As Ron, a former international student, said, “I can list [my] New Zealand friends with one hand but they are good friends, they keep in touch.”

In Phase Three, as in the earlier phases, participants had mostly warm feelings for New Zealand and New Zealanders. For some, this was despite having found it difficult to get work, experiencing racist encounters and/or having difficulty getting work visas. Positive comments indicated a sense of familiarity with and comfort in New Zealand, an appreciation of New Zealand’s natural environment, and an appreciation of the quality of life available in New Zealand. Negative comments had to do with New Zealand being too “mono-cultural” and restrictive in its visa regulations.

Wei Bi’s account provides a notable cautionary tale. Wei Bi was anticipating a ‘forced’ return to PRC owing to a failed visa application. Despite speaking warmly about his New Zealand friends, he expressed negative views of New Zealand as a place that is “risky” for international students: “Free to do anything here and have heaps of worry and at great risk. The hard part is the tremendous loneliness, huge pressure”. Wei Bi wanted to warn Chinese parents against sending their children to New Zealand to study:

When New Zealand universities [are] promoting business at expos, I will go and protest to warn people against New Zealand setup... best to convince not to come. Will set up website mentioning suicide that happened due to stress. Another example, a Chinese girl becoming prostitute. This will warn people about risking their children here.

Although Wei Bi’s account was exceptional rather than typical, it highlights the need for educational institutions and government organisations alike to work to streamline and support (rather than complicate) students’ study-to-work pathways. Wei Bi’s account reiterates Wesley’s (2009) warning that short-changing ‘international’ graduates can do much harm to inter-national (in our case, Asia-New Zealand) relationships.³¹

30 Deloitte (2007). *The Experiences of International Students in New Zealand: Report on the results of the national survey*. Wellington: Ministry of Education; Ward, C., and Masgoret, A. (2004). *The Experiences of International Students in New Zealand*. Wellington: Ministry of Education

31 Wesley, M. (2009). For a discussion of international student safety in New Zealand, see Sawir, E., Marginson, S., Nyland, C., Ramia, G., and Rawlings-Sanaei, F. (2009). The pastoral care of international students in New Zealand: Is it more than a consumer protection regime? *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 29(1), 45-59.

4. CONCLUSION

EXPECTATIONS, RELATIONSHIPS AND NEW ZEALAND-ASIA BUSINESS

This study has examined Asia-born, New Zealand-educated business graduates' post-graduation pathways. Our findings suggest that these graduates have enormous potential to contribute to the development and maintenance of Asia-New Zealand business relationships in creative and innovative ways.

Asia-born, New Zealand-educated business graduates are a highly diverse group of people with a range of qualifications, familial and social backgrounds, and business or other aspirations. Many are highly skilled and multilingual, Asia – and New Zealand-literate, and experts at working within and across different cultural worldviews. In addition, many have familial, business and social connections in Asia, alongside a firm commitment to New Zealand. However, upon graduation most lack the work experience that New Zealand employers seem to require. Significant returns are likely to await businesses willing to invest in providing work experience opportunities.

The graduates in our study had high expectations for careers in business and their own future contributions to the field. For some, these expectations lowered somewhat over time. By Phase Three, unemployed graduates wishing to stay in New Zealand were desperate to get jobs – in Ron's words, "any job" that might afford an opportunity for work-residence in New Zealand.

For other graduates, expectations had begun to translate into careers with possibilities for fostering Asia-New Zealand links in trade, investment and services. For a few graduates, clear career pathways had emerged where Asia-New Zealand-related business connections were already a reality. Some were in positions of current or potential influence in this area. Others had developed Asia-New Zealand-related business connections as entrepreneurs, either on their own or in conjunction with family.

Whatever the present reality for the graduates in our study, their clear intention was to maintain the relationships forged during their student days. Many have relationships with New Zealanders, New Zealand-based co-nationals and co-internationals. Although they are not based on business per se, they could nevertheless serve to build growing business relationships for New Zealand, for example through promoting travel and tourism or promoting New Zealand international education opportunities to graduates' children, family members and friends.

New Zealand's foreign policy has had a growing focus on improving integration with Asia or becoming part of an integrated region, being a 'good neighbour', boosting New Zealand's growth by linking to the growth of Asian economies, and becoming more 'Asia-literate'.³²

As is argued elsewhere, a lack of policy integration across trade, foreign affairs and international education has been a problematic characteristic of the past two decades.³³ Large numbers of Asia-born, New Zealand-educated graduates present an unprecedented opportunity to build constructive engagement with Asia at many levels.³⁴

Our research suggests that well integrated, forward-thinking policy would support engagement from recruitment to graduation and beyond. This could be through ensuring that prospective students and graduates have:

- excellent, transparent information about study-to-work pathways;
- access to social and professional networks, excellent careers advice, and reliable immigration information where necessary; and
- straightforward but flexible pathways through visa application processes (including excellent advice and explanations when visa applications are denied).

Realising graduates' potential (economic and social) contribution to New Zealand requires policies and practices that proactively cultivate a climate in which all graduates can become established, grow and flourish. Fostering such an environment is likely to serve the long-term interests of New Zealand, whether graduates stay (and contribute to the local economy) or leave (maintaining connections and/or recommending the country to others).³⁵

32 Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2007).

33 Butcher, A., and McGrath, T. (2011). A sin of omission: New Zealand's export education industry and foreign policy. In Holden, C., Kilkey, M., and Ramia, G. (Eds.). *Social Policy Review 23*. Bristol, UK: The Policy Press.

34 McGrath et al. (2007).

35 For a more in-depth discussion of these points, Lindsay, V. et al. (2011). *Service Success in Asia*. Wellington: Victoria University and Ministry of Science and Innovation, see page 47; also Ho, E., Ip, M., and Lewin, J. (2010). *New Zealand's Diaspora in China: Untapped resources*. Wellington: Asia New Zealand Foundation; see page 33; and Gamlen, A. (2011). *Engaging Asia: The role of the diaspora*. Wellington: Asia New Zealand Foundation, see page 9.

GRADUATES' POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO ASIA-NEW ZEALAND BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

New Zealand's recent trade negotiations have focused on Asia, and in particular the large commercial markets of China and India. This is not surprising given the growing world dominance of these Asian economies. Policy discussions frequently refer to relationships between Asia and New Zealand and their challenges.³⁶

New Zealand has unique challenges as a geographically isolated, small country endeavouring to do business across linguistic and socio-cultural divisions and with countries that have much larger economies. Our research highlights a need to recognise Asia-born, New Zealand-educated business graduates as a significant resource. As stated elsewhere, "broader Asia skills are in short supply amongst non-Asian New Zealanders, including in business. But New Zealand has a lot of Asia knowledge already among Asian New Zealanders and recent migrants and visitors."³⁷

Many graduates in our study had creative ideas about how their cultural and linguistic skills and/or international connections could benefit New Zealand-Asia business relationships. Both the Phase Two and Three graduates identified ways in which they could contribute, whether from Asia, in New Zealand, or working between the two contexts.³⁸ Table 1 reflects their combined suggestions.

Table 1

GRADUATES' POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO ASIA-NEW ZEALAND BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

In Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing New Zealand-related advice to businesses; • sharing New Zealand expertise; • promoting New Zealand-Asia business relationships in an entrepreneurial capacity; and • promoting New Zealand-Asia business relationships at policy level.
In a 'bridging' capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advising both Asia and New Zealand-based companies on areas of potential conflict or cultural misunderstanding; • working to promote understanding and exchange in educational contexts; • developing New Zealand-Asia business (trade or entrepreneurial) relationships; • providing a bridging connection for business investment migrants; and • helping New Zealand companies to build relationships with Asian businesses.
In New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing companies with Asia-related services; • promoting New Zealand-Asia business relationships in an entrepreneurial capacity; and • providing Asian clients with accessible, culturally appropriate services.

While evidence elsewhere suggests that New Zealand businesses are beginning to recognise this potential contribution,³⁹ our research highlighted Asia-born graduates' frustration, and in some cases anger, when employment opportunities remained elusive or when INZ failed to recognise 'stepping stone' employment as a legitimate starting point for a long-term business career.

³⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2007).

³⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2007). *Our Future with Asia. Asia white paper*. Wellington: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, see page 59.

³⁸ See McGrath et al. (2011), p. 21.

³⁹ Ho et al. (2010), p. 33.

Asia-born, New Zealand-educated business graduates' potential long-term contribution to the development and maintenance of Asia-New Zealand business relationships is likely to remain unfulfilled as long as they face barriers to employment and/or leave New Zealand with negative memories and unfulfilled study/post-graduation expectations. Policy is needed that facilitates smooth post-graduation transition pathways, for example in:

- immigration, through flexible, responsive practices;
- education, through providing accurate information and excellent transition support; and
- business, through education on the competitive advantages and unique skills and knowledge such graduates are likely to offer businesses.

It may be argued that in the past few decades New Zealand has held to a belief that providing education will automatically result in ongoing goodwill between Asia and New Zealand (as was often the case during the Colombo Plan era).⁴⁰ However, in the current 'export education' era, Asia-born international students have paid for their education and owe very little to New Zealand. Wei Bi's bitterness as a 'forced' returnee following a difficult immigration process and unsuccessful visa application highlights the need for New Zealand to nurture relationships through education in more than a transactional, business sense.

Although further longitudinal research is needed to track Asia-born, New Zealand-educated graduates' employment and social futures, our study suggests that they are more likely to contribute to Asia-New Zealand relationships characterised by strong elements of trust and goodwill when they have had excellent educational experiences, experienced positive study-to-work transition pathways, and developed close relationships in New Zealand and with New Zealanders.⁴¹

In summary, our study provides promising evidence that engaged and connected Asia-born business graduates who have strong connections with New Zealand and New Zealanders are likely to benefit New Zealand businesses in a myriad of ways (both on and off shore).

Long-term, trusting relationships, enduring engagement and a sense of goodwill are more likely to develop if prospective students:

- receive accurate information (about their courses and likely employment prospects), relevant educational opportunities (for example internship opportunities and exposure to international business cases) and excellent transition support (including facilitated connections with New Zealand businesses if desired);
- enjoy respectful and responsive interactions with INZ personnel; and
- are socially connected to others in or from New Zealand.

Foreign affairs, trade, immigration, education and labour policy initiatives should be aligned to this end.

⁴⁰ For example, see: Ministry of Education (2007). *The International Education Agenda: A strategy for 2007-2012*, Wellington: Ministry of Education.

⁴¹ Ibid.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

GOVERNMENT

New Zealand Inc (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, Immigration New Zealand, New Zealand Tourism) and other government agencies:

Recognise that New Zealand's foreign policy and trade interests in Asia are affected by Asia-born, New Zealand-educated graduates' experiences of life and study in New Zealand, and their post-graduation pathways.

Develop policies, support and coordinated initiatives to connect with Asia-born, New Zealand educated graduates resident in Asia and New Zealand. More specifically, ensure links across expatriate New Zealand associations (such as KEA⁴²), New Zealand-Asia friendship societies and educational alumni associations to ensure that Asia-born graduates remain included and involved in New Zealand-related networks.

EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATIONS, CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND BUSINESS NEW ZEALAND:

Educate employers on the opportunities afforded by employing Asia-born, New Zealand-educated business graduates.

Educate employers, business education institutions and students on the benefits of immigration.

Explore ways to enable internship and New Zealand workplace skill-development opportunities for Asia-born, New Zealand-educated (and all) graduates.

Explore the role of Asia-born graduates in attracting business investment in New Zealand.

Recognise the importance of taking a proactive oversight role in recruiting, supporting and nurturing Asia-born students. Work alongside graduates to ensure that post-graduation pathways are comprehensively supported at all levels.

Encourage and help to create connections between Asia-born, New Zealand-educated graduates and business and trade associations.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, EDUCATION NEW ZEALAND AND MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Continue to develop immigration policies and improve processes to help ensure Asia-born, New Zealand-educated business graduates' success in New Zealand's labour market.

Work with INZ to provide students with up-to-date information on study-work-residence pathways, both before course selection and throughout students' study programmes.

Ensure that business programmes connect theory and practice and promote opportunities for practical work experience.

Ensure excellent career support services that:

- provide accurate, relevant information to migrant and international students;
- support students throughout the job application process; and
- promote students' workplace-related skills and understanding.

Promote students' inclusion in local, national and international business networks. Consider ways to encourage links between students and prospective employers (for example through work experience, coursework, research projects and internship opportunities).

BUSINESSES

Recognise the unique skills, understandings and social capital that Asia-born, New Zealand-educated business graduates can bring to New Zealand businesses, especially when businesses are seeking to develop connections within Asia or with Asian clients and colleagues.

Work with business educators and INZ to provide more work experience and internship options that suit Asia-born students and graduates.

Provide education to members on immigration processes and the importance of employer support for visa applicants.

RESEARCH

Our study was a three-year pilot research project that tracked students from graduation (or their final year of study) through the immediate post-graduation period. We recommend:

- further longitudinal studies designed to gain information on Asia-born graduates' post-graduation pathways on a larger scale, for a longer timeframe;
- research that examines Asia-born business graduates' role in relation to Asia-New Zealand business relationships 5, 10 and 15 years after graduation; and
- research that explores the links between social networks and labour market (employment) trends and performance for Asia-born migrants, including international students.

⁴² Gamlen, A. (2011). *Engaging Asia: The role of the diaspora. Outlook 15*. Wellington: Asia New Zealand Foundation, see page 10.

AUTHOR PROFILES

Terry McGrath began his involvement in education as a high school chemistry teacher and then moved to a pastoral care role amongst tertiary students over 20 years ago. Currently he has a role as an international student chaplain at Massey University in Palmerston North. He retired as the National Director for ISM^{NZ} (International Student Ministries of New Zealand) in 2011. This latter role involved oversight of ISM^{NZ}-sponsored chaplains and pastoral care workers throughout New Zealand. His professional interests include development and research involving international students and migrants, and he has an interest in professional development in the international education industry.

Dr Vivienne Anderson is a lecturer at the University of Otago, College of Education. Her doctoral research (in Education and Anthropology) examined international and local women students' experiences in a New Zealand tertiary education context. Vivienne is particularly interested in the use of qualitative research methods to gain in-depth experiential data that informs policy and teaching practice. Her research interests include internationalisation, teaching and learning; gender issues in education; and teaching and learning in clinical education.

Chze Pheng Ching is a representative of ISM^{NZ}. He is also a volunteer Chaplain at Unitec. In these roles, he has good contact with international students and migrants in Auckland. Previously, he worked as a lecturer in a tertiary institution in Singapore where he taught Tourism Research and Analysis, and Marketing Communication. He also undertook business consultancy with the private sector. He has also done several pieces of research through ISM^{NZ} for different clients such as Asia:NZ and Saatchi and Saatchi.

Akira Doi is a senior leader with ISM^{NZ} working with Japanese students and migrants in Auckland as well as providing liaison of ISM^{NZ} Japanese ministry in New Zealand and amongst returnees to Japan. Akira has highly developed skills in English – Japanese translation. He has served as a teacher and Chaplain at International Pacific College in Palmerston North and currently fulfils a chaplaincy role to Japanese students in Auckland for ISM^{NZ} as well as coordinating ISM^{NZ} internship programme for Japanese students in Auckland.

Paul Stock is a Senior Tutor in Plant Biology in the Institute of Molecular Bio-Sciences at Massey University, Palmerston North. In addition he is a Chaplain at Massey University, with responsibility to coordinate the chaplaincy team. He has also directed Internship training with ISM^{NZ} and regularly contributes in research and to professional development of staff and chaplains. Paul worked in Indonesia for two years as a visiting lecturer and has over 20 years of involvement with international students in New Zealand.

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