Candid views on internationalisation processes at two 
Australian universities

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This paper presents an account of internationalisation activities in relation to the presence of onshore international students, and particularly non-western students, at two Australian universities using the findings from interviews with senior staff with significant experience in their institution’s initiatives in this area. The point of departure of this paper from other whole-of-institution focused entries in the literature is that it explores personal interpretations of senior staff about what internationalisation means at their respective institutions. This is particularly so in relation to the suitability of curricula for a student body which is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of its cultural, language, and education characteristics.

Keywords: internationalisation, higher education, curriculum context and process

Introduction

This paper is informed by interview conversations the researcher had with four senior academics on internationalisation processes associated with onshore international student populations at two Australian universities. The research was carried out as part of a PhD project which ultimately examined a profile of an ideal lecturer for teaching international students. The reflections and views of the four senior academics primarily drive the paper. The information they provide offers insights into issues, sensitive at times, that are more likely to be aired in collegial conversations with colleagues and in committee meetings rather than those presented in university promotional material and policies and, it also has to be said, in most of the contemporary research on the internationalisation of Australian higher education. Documented first-person accounts from experienced, senior staff who can reflect broadly on the history and multi-dimensionality of the engagement of tertiary institutions in this area are not widely reported in the related literature.

The presentation of this paper differs from what is traditionally found in academic articles. Rather than building a conceptual framework based on the literature associated with the internationalisation of higher education and then discussing the research findings through that lens, it instead develops a framework by structuring the simultaneous reporting and discussion of data around a three-dimensional model which informs the reader of different perspectives that ultimately relate to, and impact on, teaching international students. Further, references to the relevant literature are strategically placed throughout the results and discussion section of the paper. In this sense the format of this paper might be viewed as somewhat contentious because to a large degree it will be up to the reader to ponder their own conclusions, both about any inferences to be drawn from the paper in general and also about how the two universities ‘shape up’ against each other and against other tertiary institutions. From the author’s point of view, however, there is value to be had in letting the research participants’ words speak for themselves.
They tell an interesting, compelling, and complex story which at the very least offers a candid snapshot of what was happening at the two institutions a few years into the new millennium.

The category of non-western international students was selected not only because such students are by far the most numerous in Australian university classrooms (Nelson, 2004, p. 31) in terms of the overall international student population, but also because their learning characteristics are often cited as being potentially challenging when viewed against the requirements of Australian academe (see, for example, Biggs, 1996; De Fazio, 1999; Kenyon & Amrapala, 1991; Teekens, 2000; Yap, 1997). As such, it can be suggested that the way in which Australian universities respond to having non-western, international students on their home campuses might well be a litmus test for assessing their internationalisation initiatives in relation to curriculum context (where, when, and to whom content is taught, and why) and curriculum process (how teaching and learning occurs). The author recognises, however, that the category of ‘non-western international students’ indicates significant diversity rather than homogeneity.

**Methodology and method**

This phenomenographic research paper uses data obtained from open-ended interviews carried out towards the end of 2003 and into 2004. Ethics approval was obtained before the research process began. Research participants were interviewed individually and between one and two times each. Each interview ranged between 60 and 90 minutes and each conversation was recorded and later transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Given that only two key staff were interviewed at each university and that these people were leaders in internationalisation processes in their respective institutions at the time, pseudonyms are used in this paper in place of their real names. Further, the pseudonyms may or may not reflect the actual gender of the interviewees. Moreover, apart from the specifics made evident by the quotes, each university is purposefully described in generalities when it comes to institutional structures, departments and policies. Tactically, this is similar to Bartell’s (2003) treatment of two Canadian universities where he succeeds in describing the institutions without specifically naming them or the various departments in their organisational structures.

The findings from the interviews are presented as views of internationalisation from three different vantage points. This categorisation was achieved in the data analysis phase of the research through coding the data from the semi-structured, open-ended interviews with NVivo qualitative research software and then thinking about the best way to conceptually present the relevant interview data. The first vantage point is a view from the ‘top-level’ and this represents each university’s broad experience with internationalisation activities from a senior management perspective. The second, a ‘middle-level’ view, provides an assessment of internationalisation activities through the Academic Development perspective, especially in terms of the links between policy and practice. The third view is of ‘grassroots-level’ interactions between academic staff and international students as assessed by the senior staff. In reality, the three levels are not as distinct as what they are made out to be here.
Results and discussion - interviews with key staff at both universities

Top-Level Perspective on internationalisation at University A

International students at University A

Douglas indicated that the University’s experience with international students went back several decades and included Colombo Plan scholarship recipients. He said that the introduction of the Full Fee-Paying Overseas Student (FFPOS) program in the late 1980s led to rapid growth in international student numbers in some niche areas in the University:

The growth (at the University) flattened in the early 1990s and the rest of the country took off in terms of international students and then (the University) started to pick up in the late 1990s again. So as a result we’re a relatively small player in the overall scheme of things in terms of international students.

Douglas suggested a few reasons why there was a period in the 1990s during which the international student numbers flattened out. He commented that the University’s ‘International Student Recruitment Office’ was perhaps inappropriately structured, poorly resourced and gave little priority to Asian countries as markets:

One of the reasons why numbers started to pick up in the late 1990s is we decided to start recruiting in places like Hong Kong, which seemed exotic for (the University) at that time and, of course, China followed on very closely on from that.

The main source countries for the University’s onshore programs at the time of interviews, according to Douglas, were China (including Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), Singapore, the United States, Japan and Norway. This mix, he suggested, was:

A little perhaps less traditional, in the sense that the non-Asian markets are represented. Our student intake has always been more diverse than almost every other university in the country and diverse not only in the mix within Asia but also in having the European, particularly Scandinavians and having the United States citizens and Canadians now.

The University also had some experience with offshore programs in Malaysia, China, Singapore, Thailand and Norway. Douglas stated that these programs were all successful despite being modest in terms of numbers, which reflected the fact that most of them were in niche areas.

Contemporary approach to internationalisation at University A

When asked what ‘internationalisation’ currently meant for the University, Douglas suggested that an ‘International Committee’ was soon to be presented with a document that constituted a draft definition of principles that related to this area:

There is a definition which I’m hoping the ‘International Committee’ will agree is internationalisation and then of course the next step is to say “Well, how do we seek to become international?” We might not do everything but that’s what we would understand by internationalisation.

Michelle also offered an insight into related developments. When asked if she knew of any internationalisation policies which related to university teaching she replied:
There is a group that I’m on now that is looking at all the education policies in the University and what we’ve identified is an absence of policies (italics added for emphasis) that actually attend to internationalisation. And they are being drafted at the moment in this group. And that will be a framework then for a teaching and learning plan for the University.

The comments from Douglas and Michelle make it clear that the University, despite having over a decade of experience with reasonably significant numbers of international students in onshore and offshore programs, is only just beginning to look at what internationalisation means in the context of the University’s operations. Michelle expressed a keen desire for this to proceed:

I would love to see all our processes in the University close the loop so that everybody has to think about what it means for all students in their classroom and if they have a predominance of students who haven’t spent time doing undergraduate degrees or their schooling in Australia or come from other countries to do it here, that they will have thought about it from the position of those students to say “How do we make learning possible for them?”

Michelle’s comments above are strongly oriented towards the concept of student-centred learning (Biggs, 2003; Ramsden, 2003) and, it would seem, of Biggs’s (2003) Level 3 Teaching which is inclusive and focuses on what students do in relation to teaching and learning arrangements.

**Theoretical background to internationalisation at University A**

Douglas was asked to comment on the theoretical framework that informed the University’s current approach to internationalisation. His response was based on an historical view of the relationship between globalisation, industrialisation, internationalisation, and education. Given that Douglas is a key player in the development of his University’s approach to internationalisation, it is worth considering his thoughts in full:

To the extent that the strategy comes through my office through a whole series of engagements, I guess I have an influence on that and certainly what influences me is a broader historical understanding of globalisation into which I can see the role of international education, rather than a sort of model of pedagogy or education per se. And so I see international education as a process which is building in intensity and strength and has been, in Australia certainly since the 50s, but actually for much longer that that, probably over a century or two, that’s changing its form in Australia from Colombo Plan to more mass recruitment of students, to offshore programs, to twinning, to offshore delivery, to on-line and so on. So, yes, I think there is a notion that within the context of globalisation, universities are constantly confronting challenges. And that educational model is changing, and changing fairly often. That broader globalisation model would see internationalisation as being fundamentally transformed at the beginning of the industrial revolution (brief pause) industrialisation occurring in particular places and then internationalising through trade but then through investment and then through finance and international education as a service sector has been late in that process. It has existed in that process but its real impetus has been late in that process and I see parallels there, without wanting to say that education is the same as industry or manufacturing, but there are certainly parallels in the way it responds to forces.

Although there is an emerging body of literature which specifically concerns internationalisation and higher education, Douglas did not mention this in his reflections on the theoretical basis which informs the University’s developments in this area. Douglas’s interpretation notwithstand-
ing, some acknowledgement of the work of authors such as, for example, such as de Wit (1997) and Knight (1997, 1999) would seem to have a place ‘at the table’ of ideas informing University A’s internationalisation processes.

**Strategic approach to internationalisation at University A**

Douglas was asked whether the University had a strategic approach to internationalising its operations:

> We’re moving from a phase where we’ve been concentrating on growth to one where we’re starting to see the fruits of that and that therefore now our strategy will become more strategic because we’ve probably got more choices because we’re not so pressed for growth. We have more options open and hence we can be more strategic.

Douglas was asked to comment on internationalisation strategies over the next five years. Whilst it was still important to increase international student numbers in the interim, he suggested that after five years the University would be looking to maintain a stable international student population and focus on issues of quality in education:

> I think that (the University) is well-positioned over the next five years to use that internationalisation process not just to grow a bit more to earn a bit more money but actually to stamp ourselves as a quality (brief pause) to improve our brand as a quality institution across some key markets overseas. And if, by the end of five years, we fulfill the pragmatic needs to earn money but also improve our brand and spread our brand, then I think we would have done (brief pause) and sitting beneath the brand of course is the fact that we improve what we do as a University in every way, then I think we will be very pleased with what we’ve achieved.

**Middle-level perspective on internationalisation at University A**

*From policy to practice*

Given that University A was in the process of developing internationalisation policies that would in some way impact on teaching and learning, Michelle was asked if the ‘Academic Development Department’ had a role to play in helping turning policy into practice:

> Well I see that as one of our key responsibilities. That everything we do we try to start from where the practice is at and where the policy is at. There should be a lot of interaction between practice and policy (brief pause) and between theory, too. And both should inform the other. So that if policy becomes inadequate, then you change the policy rather than try to adapt the practice. So, very much of the role of the ‘Academic Development Department’ is to be a mediator between policy and practice.

Michelle believed that her department facilitated practical outcomes from policy documents by networking between the various stakeholders and developing programs in response to their various needs. Besides working at a formal level within the University, a degree of the work of the ‘Academic Development Department’ is clearly carried out at an informal level to try to achieve alignment between policy and practice:

> My job, I think, is to confront them with possibilities and help them to reflect on their own practice and establish some principles by which we’re heading. You know, things like respect for all students, a respectful education system, one that’s affirming to all people - teachers and
students. One that builds in opportunities for success for all participants, both teachers and students (brief pause) and principles of inclusion and social justice.

Michelle believed that the ‘Academic Development Department’ had a critical role to play with regard to core business activity of university teaching. She said this was a high priority in her responsibilities and it was tackled at many levels, whether working with individual lecturers, an academic department or a faculty.

**Theoretical foundation for internationalised teaching practice**

Michelle was asked to outline what sort of theory had informed her approach to internationalisation of teaching and learning. She said that she had read quite a lot, “particularly Brigit Ballard’s stuff.” Her main philosophy, however, was based on an integrated view of teaching and learning:

> Good practice in classrooms where there are international students is really just good teaching practice. There are some basically good principles about teaching. If you do those properly and there’s an environment of enquiry and respect (brief pause) and being able to explore what’s difficult and value what’s difficult in learning as a learning opportunity. I just think it’s jolly good teaching practice and if we actually get people practicing in ways that the theory would say is appropriate for international students or indigenous students or students with disabilities (brief pause) anybody that we’re saying has special concerns, we actually get it right for all the students.

Michelle’s comment above resonates with Biggs’s (2003) notion of good teaching being inclusive above all else. Further, it is worth noting her familiarity with Ballard’s work. Ballard and Clanchy (1984, 1997) made valuable contributions to the literature on teaching and supervising international students. Their work remains widely referenced in contemporary research in this area which indicates its ongoing usefulness.

**Internationalised curriculum process and context**

When asked if there was adequate attention paid in the University to internationalisation of the curriculum in terms of curriculum context (again, the where, when, and to whom content is taught, and why) and curriculum process (again, how teaching and learning occurs), that is, the characteristics of those being taught and how this is done, Michelle replied:

(pause) Ah, I don’t think there’s enough attention to it. I don’t think there’s really any attention to it (modest laugh) except by a few who are voluntary. I don’t think it’s because people haven’t got a will for it. It’s they just don’t know what to do. With our (teaching and learning) website, the most accessed site is the one about inclusiveness and equal opportunity. When we have a workshop on tutorials, you say to people, “What are your constraints?” and they straight away say, “How do we manage the diversity in the classroom?”

**Challenges for the ‘Academic Development Department’**

There were a number of general challenges that Michelle alluded to which permeated the scope of the department’s work. One was the pivotal role of the ‘Academic Development Department’ in coordinating activities that related to development of staff. Michelle said that although the department was a logical hub for these activities, she worried that the individualistic focus of staff development “tends to absolve the organisation” of its broader responsibilities in the area. Another challenge was in the form of resistance to change:
I think the biggest impediment are the staff that have been around here for a long time and are trying to restore past glories. They want to recapture what they always did before and it will never come back. They see programs such as I run as an intrusion on time so they are very resistant. And then it’s very hard for a new staff member (brief pause) often they don’t feel anything like that at all. I certainly don’t think that there is any resistance at senior administration level. They’re intelligent, informed people. They can see the writing on the wall that we have to change. And we have to improve our practice. And they’re prepared to do so and will put the policies in place. But there is great pressure from overloaded academics who are terrified by not yet another change.

Grassroots-level perspective on internationalisation at University A
Douglas was asked to consider what might be the biggest academic issues for non-western, international students in particular. He began by suggesting that although he was not aware of any huge plagiarism issues at the University, it would most likely be an issue, given that it was “a national problem.” He then encapsulated the challenges faced by international students by referring to “the whole question of students’ language capability and hence their ability to understand the nuances in what’s being taught.” Douglas then turned this around to the lecturers’ perspective and indicated that having international students in the classroom raised the standards at which lecturers are required to teach:

The skills required to successfully engage in international education are substantial and they are not the same, or they are not identical, to the skills you require to do that job with a homogenous cultural group. They are quite profound. I think engaging with the world requires retooling in lots of ways.

He thought that the University systematically assisted academic staff to meet the requirements of a changing workplace in three ways. One was through academic staff themselves taking responsibility for acquiring new skills and developing their practices. Douglas acknowledged that this happened very unevenly “depending upon who the individual is.” The second way was through short courses offered by faculties that focused on particular issues or skills. The third way was through an “academic development and training centre approach.” Having outlined these three pathways, Douglas admitted:

One of my worst fears (brief pause) sort of sits in the pit of my stomach at times (brief pause) is that some staff really just don’t want to be bothered with it. And I think that’s a problem with all teachers if some teachers are like that. You know, it’s challenging. It makes you uncomfortable. You just would rather teach people who are like you. Come from the same school. Live in the same suburb. Speak the same language. But the trouble is that you can’t do that. Australia’s not like that and it never has been. So I think that’s one (issue) for some lecturers but I think it’s a problem for all of us if it’s allowed to persist.

When asked what might be the biggest academic issues for Australian lecturers who teach non-western, international students, Michelle said:

(sigh) Probably ignorance. Oops! (laugh). I think, ah, they’re busy. Ah, they’re confronted with a problem they often can’t identify and name. Ah, there isn’t time for them to pause or support for them to pause (brief pause) to be able to examine what’s actually going on in the environment. There isn’t that chance to be able to spend time with an international student for a long time, to actually understand where they’re coming from.
Without having time to engage with the issues, Michelle suggested that academic staff may view international students through a lens which could be distorted by “a set of stereotypes (brief pause) a set of beliefs (brief pause) preconceptions.” This, according to Biggs’s (2003) thinking on teaching in higher education, would generally be indicative of a deficit model of teaching.

Interviews with Key Staff at University B

Top-level perspective on internationalisation at University B

*International students at University B*

Ida said that when she joined University B in the mid-1990s, the international student program was a small operation run from the University Registry and had a few hundred enrolments. From this point onwards there was a concerted effort to build the international student population and after 10 years University B had established, by Australian standards, very large onshore and offshore international student programs. Ida said that at the time of the interview, “One third of our students are, in fact, international students.”

Ida recalled that the University’s international students were initially drawn mainly “from the Chinese diaspora in Asia, that is, like most other (Australian) universities (brief pause) Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong.” These days, she said, the major groups of onshore international students come from Malaysia, China, India, Hong Kong and Singapore, although more recently there have been influxes from Scandinavia, France and Germany.

Contemporary approach to internationalisation

*When asked what ‘internationalisation’ currently meant for University B, Ida responded:*

We’ve been fairly clear about this from the mid-1990s when we constituted a working party on the internationalisation of the curriculum. And that working party took a very broad brief on what we should be trying to do with this. So that it’s much more than recruitment of international students onshore and the delivery of programs offshore.

Ida said that University B’s approach to internationalisation was ultimately about the processes and practices it would have to engage in to become an “international university.” Barry, too, suggested that there had been a conscious effort at University B to move away from considering internationalisation solely in relation to numbers of international students.

Ida gave a number of examples of how internationalisation imperatives were incorporated into a spread of University B’s activities. These ranged from getting more Australian students to study offshore as part of their degree, to ensuring that academic and administrative staff were culturally sensitive. In addition, there existed a strong policy framework around degree outcomes, one of which said Ida, was the expectation that graduates of University B “will have an international perspective in their work and in their lives more generally.”

There was also a staff recruitment initiative used by the ‘Human Resources Department’ that sought prospective employees with a demonstrated “international perspective” (or who were at least sympathetic and open to such a perspective). From Barry’s point of view, this would be a fundamental catalyst for the success of any internationalisation initiative:
You can, I think, have internationalisation at the policy level and then at a program and course level, but sitting underneath all of that is at teacher level. The fundamental belief that I have is you cannot teach an internationalised curriculum unless you have an international perspective yourself.

Of interest, Barry related two instances of institutional support for internationalisation from a financial point of view. One was the University’s sponsorship of a teaching department to completely review and modify its program to fall in line with the intent of an internationalisation policy:

They were given some money to do it and that, I think, is a critical issue. I think that’s the way that the institution shows that it values internationalisation. It puts its money where its mouth is and says we’re going to give you the time to do this because we think it’s valuable so we’re going to give you a reasonable amount of money to get together as a team and do this.

The second example was a recently introduced proportional funding model that enabled the ‘Academic Development Department’ to obtain more money to carry out their work. Barry said that in the past, the funding model gave them a static amount of income, regardless of how many international students were enrolled:

The large proportion of our work is working with international students and working with staff who are working with international students (brief pause) which we call providing direct and indirect services to students. Direct services to the student. Indirect through the academic staff member. Working with them to internationalise their practice is indirect service to international students. So we now get extra dollars per student that walks through the door.

At this early stage, there is a strong sense of University B having a coherent and integrated approach to internationalizing its business and educational objectives.

Theoretical background to internationalisation
Ida was asked to outline the theoretical foundation to University B’s approach to internationalisation:

We’ve clearly adopted the Knight and de Wit model (of internationalisation in higher education) you know, globalisation is the process, internationalisation is the strategy. In all of what we’ve done we’ve pretty much remained fairly constantly engaged with that particular model, recognising that it must be holistic in terms of how we go forward. And so, de Wit and Knight remain probably the people that we’ve relied upon, although we have read rather more widely than that obviously.

Barry concurred with Ida by independently stating that Knight and de Wit’s definition of internationalisation was the driving force for the University’s policies which sought to imbue an intercultural dimension into teaching, learning and research. This is consistent with Harman’s (2005) observation that the work of Knight, along with her Dutch colleague de Wit, “has considerably influenced Australian thinking on internationalization and globalization” (p. 124).
**Strategic approach to internationalisation**
Ida’s earlier comments indicated that University B began to grapple with internationalisation issues on an institution-wide basis from the mid-1990s. She continued by saying that whilst their University’s approach may not be perfect, they had been consistently driving the internationalisation agenda for a number of years and nationally they would be regarded as one of the institutions “with the most comprehensive sorts of policies in that area.”

When asked what might be the main focus of University B’s internationalisation framework over the next five years, Ida said there were targets for the number and mix of international students they would like to have, in both the onshore and offshore programs. She also mentioned one other issue, although its link to internationalisation themes was more oblique. Ida acknowledged there was a fundamental question about the nature of academic work that the University was keen to address. This would involve thinking about how the increasing administrative load could be shifted from academic staff so they could concentrate on research or teaching.

**Middle-level perspective on internationalisation at University B**

**The ‘Academic Development Department’**
The ‘Academic Development Department’ at University B was a multi-faceted operation that provided a range of academic development resources for academic and administrative staff as well as dedicated support services for both Australian and international students. Whilst this study is more concerned with academic staff, it is important to acknowledge the existence of the student services section which, according to Ida, offered a “whole raft of resources for how to study inside the University in terms of our philosophy and so forth.”

Ida said the arm of the department that worked with academic staff had a range of activities to help them teach international students and understand different cultures. Lecturers could participate in face-to-face activities such as seminars and workshops or access on-line information about teaching international students onshore or offshore.

**Internationalised Curriculum Process and Context**

With regard to teaching, Ida mentioned that “we encourage people to be reflective about their practice in teaching.” Barry reported, “We have a Code of Good Practice for University Teaching which has been internationalised and covers ways in which people should teach if they’re going to teach well.” The code encourages academic staff to consider their discipline area from a range of different cultural perspectives and not simply an Australian or western viewpoint. Although senior staff were committed to a University-wide approach to internationalisation, Barry thought that not all of them understood what it meant. He elaborated:

I get a sense that there’s not a full understanding really of what internationalisation might mean for teaching. Some people think it means having international students in class. Other people think it means assisting Australian students to study abroad or go on exchange. But not many people see them all sitting together and what that means for their teaching and learning, their teaching practice and their learning principles like providing a range of assessment options that suit a whole range of different cultural backgrounds. Some of them might not necessarily see that as part of internationalisation.
Ida said that due to the very strong teaching and learning framework inside the University, quite a lot of work had been done to internationalise curriculum process and context. He conceded, however, “If you get down and dig around, and scratch around among the programs there’s a fair chance that it’s in the documentation but not necessarily as obvious in the teaching process.” Barry made a similar observation and said that the internationalisation of curriculum process and context “would vary across the University immensely. You would get pockets of very good practice and in other places it’s not done.”

Both Ida and Barry believed that offshore teaching experience had the potential to help academic staff internationalise their approach to curriculum context and process. Ida said that before staff taught overseas they were given preparation in terms of understanding culture and cultural sensitivities. Barry commented that the University’s decision to pursue an offshore teaching program had changed peoples’ perspectives, for better or worse:

For some people it’s just cemented their views of what an international student is and what the problems are. But for others it’s moved them along and they’ve been saying things like, “I’ve really had to rethink what I’m doing because when I do this in Hong Kong I find they don’t actually seem to understand what I’m talking about. But I’ve found that if I take a slightly different tack they do understand”. So there’s been a little bit of movement like that and I think that will help but I don’t think we’re going to see massive opening up to new ideas in all areas.

**Theoretical foundation for internationalised teaching practice**

Already it has been made clear that University B’s internationalisation strategies which are directed towards teaching, learning and research are underwritten by the body of theory promulgated by Knight and de Wit. For Barry, the success of this in the sphere of teaching would be measured by the extent to which people moved their thinking beyond a division between “teaching local students” and “teaching international students.” Like Michelle at University A, Barry said that essentially it came down to “good practice in teaching” which embraced the notion of modifying work practices to meet the needs of student body with a demographic characterised by diversity:

So rather than seeing books about teaching international students, I’d like to see books about teaching for internationalisation which incorporated aspects of using the cultural diversity in classrooms to improve teaching practice for everybody.

**Challenges for the ‘Academic Development Department’**

Despite the policy-driven approach to internationalisation, Ida acknowledged that there would be cases where “If you go down to the local staff member and say ‘What do you think?’ in many cases they would see themselves as being too busy to actually necessarily access (information to do with internationalisation).” Barry resonated with this assessment. Whilst he believed that the ‘Academic Development Department’ at University B had an “absolutely crucial” role to play in turning internationalisation policy into practice, he rejoined, “But we can only take that so far because the power of the academic staff member is of course, absolute in terms of what they decide to do with what we do.” In another part of the interview Barry observed, “We provide a full range of services around teaching quality but we can’t compel anybody to do anything with us.”
There was also a hint of tension about the structural positioning of the ‘Academic Development Department’ when Barry noted, “We are seen as being agents of the Vice-Chancellor in many ways and therefore there’s a certain resistance from some staff to actually engaging with that agenda which some of them see as conflicting with their own agenda.” To work around this, the ‘Academic Development Department’ (in a similar way to their contemporaries at University A) worked at a range of formal and informal levels to get their message through. For example, Barry said they had made links with the ‘International Student Recruitment Office’ and ‘International Student Support Centre’ to look at “whole system” strategies that would see various University structures support each other in a complementary manner. The ‘Academic Development Department’ also encouraged academic staff who had been involved in “success stories” to help disseminate the internationalisation message. Barry said this gave the academic staff “the kudos for what they’ve done, which means the other academic staff listen to them as well because I think they’re more inclined to listen to them than they are to listen to somebody from a central unit, working for the Vice-Chancellor indirectly.”

Grassroots-level perspective on internationalisation at University B
Ida thought that there were two major issues that characterised international students at University B. The first concerned competence in English language. The University was considering raising the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) entry score because it was thought that the present level was not high enough. Ida said that even though the University has “a whole raft of people who work with international students in terms of English language, it is still a source of concern to us.” The second issue was plagiarism, which Ida saw as a more complicated phenomenon. She viewed this as largely a culture-related behaviour where in some cultures “using verbatim the words of the guru is considered to be the right thing to do rather than the wrong thing to do.” Another concern that Ida mentioned was the “‘ghetto-isation’ of international students in the University (where they) group in enclaves that don’t mix socially as much as we would like.”

In Ida’s view, these characteristics would most likely translate directly into the concerns that academic staff would have about their international students. This was especially so in the case of English language competence and plagiarism. She suggested that some staff would also perceive these factors as a workload issue because they spent a considerable amount of time making corrections to spelling and grammar in written work.

Barry thought that it was important for the international students not to be continually labeled as “the problem” by staff. He said, “It’s not because they’re a problem. We don’t need to fix them up and change them. We actually need to modify what we’re doing.” Having said this, Barry agreed that most academic staff would say the challenges that international students face relate to language. He said, “I hear them saying it’s language, it’s language, it’s language” and that the solution would be a higher English language entrance requirement. Whilst not discounting language as an issue, Barry believed that culture-specific student expectations also played a part in the challenges faced by international students. He said that couching things singularly in terms of “higher English levels” as a panacea would wrongly absolve academic staff from having to possibly look at “what they’re doing and that’s crazy.”

Barry also thought that international students themselves would see the challenges as more than solely language-related:
For many students it would be understanding what’s expected of them in the assessment and what they have to do in order to succeed. And, for some, I think it’s around their interactions with people (brief pause) students from Australia and social interaction in the classroom.

Such a view concurs with aspects of Biggs’s (2003) notion of inclusive teaching.

**Conclusion:**
This paper has presented an account of internationalisation processes at two Australian universities in relation to their respective onshore international student programs, with a focus on how such processes relate to their cohorts of non-western international students. The two accounts have been generated through the findings from interviews with senior staff with significant experience in their institution’s initiatives and activities in this area. When viewed from the ‘top’, ‘middle’ and ‘grassroots’ perspectives, a snapshot has been constructed of each institution which has outlined its (i) history in terms of its onshore international student program, (ii) rationales for pursuing internationalisation processes, (iii) theories that underpin approaches to internationalisation both from a whole-of-university perspective and from the point of view of curriculum context and curriculum process, and (iv) relationships and disjunctures between policy and practice. Whilst it has been shown that each university has pursued its own strategic plan in its own way, it is also evident that there are a number of commonalities between the institutions, especially when it comes to describing the implications associated with teaching a student body which has become increasingly diverse in terms of its cultural, language, and education characteristics. These commonalities also include various concerns, tensions and challenges that permeate each university’s work in this area. Again, from the author’s point of view, letting the words of the research participants speak for themselves has been of significant value in itself. The candid views tell a compelling, complex story and provide fascinating descriptions of the sort not normally found in the research literature associated with the internationalisation of Australian higher education.

**References:**


