The perceptions of commoditisation and internationalisation of higher education in Australia: an interview study of Chinese international students and their lecturers

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Abstract

This paper examined domestic educator and Chinese international student (CIS) perspectives on their experience of the commoditisation of international higher education in Australia. Data consisted of semi-structured interviews with academic and student participants. A Trans-disciplinary Framework derived from grounded theory and the Auditable Systematised Qualitative Analysis tool, provided structure and a method to systematise interview data. An interpretation of positioning theory gave insights into the perceived reality of research participants. Findings indicated that a number of academics struggled in their role as teachers of CIS. Concerns varied from disquiet about high fees to a perception that the quality of the teaching and learning program was lower because of the university's emphasis on international students as a source of income. Conversely, some international students paid a high price for a Western education and considered success a *fait accompli*.

Keywords Chinese international students · Grounded theory · Positioning theory · Lecturers · University stakeholders

Introduction

This paper focuses on the changing relationships between educators and students due to the commoditisation of higher education (Connell 2015), specifically concerning Chinese International Students (CIS). The paper focuses on CIS because students from China and Hong Kong make up 30% (AEI 2016) of Australia's international student intake and represent the major financial contributor to Australia's 19 billion-dollar international student industry (AEI 2015). Previous research on CIS in Australia (McCrohon and Nyland 2016) has reported on CIS perspectives of academic integrity from the standpoint of domestic educators, closely examining findings that some domestic educators felt conflicted in their role as academics, specifically in relation to institutional expectations. The changing education market is the topic discussed in this paper with an emphasis on

stakeholder perceptions, including academics and students and the impact of commoditisation on the traditional relationship of teacher and learner.

One of the issues academic participants expressed concerns about was the perception that academic integrity has been compromised because of the commoditisation of higher education, particularly among international students. Of concern was the question of how the significant amount of money paid by international students for their education affected traditional hierarchical relationships between students and teachers. The experience of some participant academics was that they had been actively encouraged to ignore academic violations, change assessments and to allow the resubmission of tasks in circumstances where this would not usually have occurred. In regards to institutional expectations, academics were often confused. Confusion occurred because some proactive strategies to ensure academic integrity were in place, including the optional use of plagiarism detection systems, warnings in course guides and induction sessions with an emphasis on referencing while at the same time, there seemed a cursory approach to curbing violations at the academy level. In a world where universities prioritise profit and politicians see the student market as part of Australia's export trade, students understandably see themselves

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as consumers who should attract certain entitlements in the marketplace.

Western higher education is experiencing significant cultural change as education becomes a commercial exercise and universities take on the persona of corporations (Miller 2010). These changes are driven by the ability of universities to charge high fees and have led institutions to look at the international education market for a substantial part of the student cohort. This has occurred in a reasonably short period, leading to unforeseen consequences for a number of university stakeholders, including academics and students.

Education is now Australia's third largest export (Dodd 2016) and is the country's biggest service export. In general, we see the commoditisation of higher education as a necessary source of income for Australia's education sector in a time of declining government funding (Lee 2008; Tran and Soejatminah 2016). Given the importance of the international education industry, this research sought to explore the relationship between education and the sale of education by addressing the question:

How is commoditisation and internationalisation of higher education perceived by academics and students?

Commoditisation and internationalisation of higher education

There is no standard definition concerning the commoditisation and internationalisation of higher education. For the purpose of this research, the description by Devlin et al. (2008) that identifies the circumstances surrounding the apparent simultaneous commoditisation and internationalisation of higher education is adopted.

Over the past decade, the nature of the funding arrangements for Australia's public higher education system has been slowly changing, with a swing away from public revenue towards student fees ... Australian universities have become increasingly dependent on the revenue from full fee-paying students to bridge shortfalls in government funding. To date, fee-paying students have been predominantly international students (p. 111).

The commoditisation and internationalisation of higher education occurring in Western countries has been explored in the literature (Holloway and Holloway 2005; Chen 2008; Lee 2008). Some authors, including Roberts and Dunworth (2012) point to positive affects surrounding commoditisation and internationalisation such as increased cultural diversity among the student body, increased international academic and political links, significant economic benefit to the Australian economy, including higher education. However, Benson (2006) expressed concern surrounding commoditisation

and internationalisation recognising that international students, particularly Asian students, were often represented in the media as being wealthy, mainly interested in permanent residency and not interested in learning. However, exploitation of these students to make up decreases in domestic government funding for higher education should not be considered acceptable.

Students as consumers

On the commoditisation and internationalisation of higher education Bianchi (2013), labelled international students as consumers and indicated that like any consumer they can be satisfied, or dissatisfied, with the product they receive. Bianchi's work is important, recognising how Australian higher education providers wanting to enrol greater numbers of international students can do so by maximising areas in the provision of education satisfying international students. Bianchi (2013) said, '... educational organizations should attempt to strengthen the satisfiers that elicit satisfaction when present and eliminate or minimize dissatisfiers' (p. 406). According to Bianchi, the attainment of high marks is the most important factor contributing to satisfaction amongst international students. Bianchi said:

Achieving high marks was found [to be] the most important contributor to the satisfaction of international students. Probably, this is because, it reflects a measurable outcome of the learning process for international students and their families (p. 404).

Hand in hand with the commoditisation of higher education have been an influx of international students from China (Chen et al. 2008) and other countries (Roberts and Dunworth 2012). In recent decades, Western countries, including Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom have all experienced increased numbers of international students (Ho et al. 2007). A number of issues concern domestic host institutions, students and their parents during the educational sojourn, including issues of accommodation and security (Paltridge et al. 2010), acculturation (Kumar and Ang 2008) and opportunities for migration and permanent residency (Gomes 2015; Ling and Tran 2015).

Sacrifice and support

Kline and Liu (2005) reported that home country support is vital for international students transitioning to host countries. This finding is associated with Bodycott's (2009) research revealing financial sacrifices made by the parents of some CIS are significant, including being prepared to borrow from family, selling their home or increasing their workload to finance their child's study abroad. Townsend and Poh (2008) identified that urban Australia has become

increasingly expensive for international students in terms of cost of living and high-priced university fees. Similarly, Owens and Loomes (2010) recognised that some international students were concerned about having enough money to support themselves throughout their studies. These views are in direct contrast with the mainstream media in a number of countries that depict CIS as 'Cash Cows' (Robertson 2011) and guilty of conspicuous displays of wealth (Levin 2016).

Sacrifice is not limited to home country supporters, as some students must work in the host country to sustain their studies. Nyland et al. (2009) said, '... many international students experience severe financial difficulties while studying in Australia with a significant proportion having a non-wage income less than half the Henderson Poverty Line' (p. 1). It is important to note that often work undertaken by international students is exploitative with low remuneration (Nyland et al. 2009) and has little in common with work related to the students' course (Tran and Soejatminah 2016). Devlin et al. (2008) found that often work undertaken by students to fund studies is detrimental, including long hours that diminish a student's capacity to attend lectures or complete schoolwork.

Accommodation and safety

Like employment, accommodation is a significant issue for international students in a commoditised education environment. According to Obeng-Odoom (2012), appropriate accommodation increases a student's safety while improving their social networks. Obeng-Odoom found that appropriate accommodation is a challenge for international students, which has a bearing on student success, with problems including suitable accommodation, location of accommodation, cost and overall affordability. Owens and Loomes (2010) indicate greater institutional support for international students is required in relation to accommodation as it is difficult for newly arrived students to negotiate agreements due to language issues and a lack of contextual knowledge. Roberts and Dunworth (2012) found issues surrounding housing to be of significant concern to international students, particularly students living off campus, facing an increase in housing problems and a simultaneous decrease in institutional support.

The issue of personal safety and security can have a detrimental affect on an international student's behaviour and experience of the host country (Brown and Jones 2013). Critically the role of personal safety and security for international students is often overlooked as a selling point for countries and institutions wanting to attract students from abroad (Nyland et al. 2010). Negative perceptions of student safety and security can have detrimental effects on international student numbers as evidenced by a decline in Indian

student enrolments into the Australian higher education sector in 2009, due to a number of racially motivated attacks (Mayer and Jain 2010; Caluya et al. 2011; Singh 2011; Khorana 2014). According to a study by Forbes-Mewett et al. (2010) safety and security in the host country is of greater importance amongst the parents of CIS, than students themselves '... this was an issue of much greater concern to parents than to students. Indeed, almost all parents identified security risks as a key influence while most students emphasised the educational and social opportunities' (p. 360). Nyland et al. (2010) identified that governments and institutions often downplay issues of safety, security and attacks on international students, concerned that public knowledge of the issue might undermine enrolments in relation to competitor countries and institutions.

Studying for residency

Another significant issue surrounding a commoditised and internationalised higher education environment is that of CIS studying in Australia for migration and permanent residency. Several authors (Gribble 2008; Robertson 2011; Gribble and Blackmore 2012; Azmat et al. 2013; Ekanayake and Jackling 2014) acknowledge that international students do study outside of their home country for reasons of permanent residency. However, Hugo (2006) highlights the benefits for host countries transitioning international students to permanent residents, saying:

... migrants transferring from temporary to permanent residence are attractive migrants from a destination country perspective. They have familiarity with Australia, often have a job, know the labour market, have qualifications accepted by Australian employers and are unlikely to experience difficulties in adjusting to Australia generally and the labour market in particular (p. 228).

In contrast, it is important to note that concerns surrounding the commoditisation of higher education are not new. McMillan and Cheney (1996) identified that metaphors relating to consumerism and markets have long been associated with higher education. These authors indicate that metaphors traditionally associated with commerce have been used in relation to higher education since the early twentieth century, long before the recent influx of full fee-paying international students into the Australian higher education sector.

Research methodology

This section examines data collected on the effects of the commoditisation and internationalisation of university level education on a variety of stakeholders, including eight CIS

Table 1 Student participants

Name	Gender	Origin	Course	Years in Australia	Australian secondary
Ching-ya	Female	China	Accounting	2	No
Lie-ling	Female	China	Actuarial studies	4	No
Oi-mun	Female	Hong Kong	Marketing	8	Yes
Pui-lin	Female	Hong Kong	Accounting	4	No
Siu-ping	Female	Hong Kong	BIS	10	Yes
So-yee	Female	Hong Kong	Accounting	11	Yes
Teck-meng	Male	China	Economics	7	Yes
Wai-tat	Male	Hong Kong	BIS	10	Yes

Table 2 The academic participants

Name	Gender	Discipline
Amanda	Female	Business and law
Catherine	Female	Accounting
Jennifer	Female	Economics
Karen	Female	Business
Michael	Male	IT and logistics
Pheona	Female	Finance

and six domestic lecturers. By categorising and analysing the comments of the participants, we can ascertain how the participants' perceive practices and attitudes within Australian institutions.

Ethical considerations

The university ethics committee approved this research, including all questions asked of lecturer and student participants. In order to protect the identity of research participants, all names were anonymised using pseudonyms. However, all other participant details depicted in Tables 1 and 2 below, including gender, country of origin, course undertaken and years of study in Australia, are correct.

Research participants

For this research, eight CIS were interviewed twice, separated by a minimum of six months. All students interviewed came from the discipline of Commerce and Management because international students study Commerce and Management subjects such as Accounting, Economics and Business Information Systems (BIS) more than any

other discipline when studying in Australia (ABS 2011). To attract CIS participants to take part in this research, an ethics-approved advertisement was placed on bulletin boards in Commerce and Marketing faculties at universities across the city. The CIS participants included six females and two males and they came from a mixture of private and public secondary schools; the majority of student participants attended secondary school in Australia before undertaking their degree. The final cohort were not representative as there was an over-representation of female students and a disproportionate number of students from Hong Kong or students who had studied at secondary school in Australia.

Along with the eight CIS interviewed as part of this research, six lecturers of CIS teaching Commerce and Management-related subjects were interviewed. The academic interviews were designed to confirm and contrast the perspectives of the CIS participants with those of their lecturers. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the lecturers. The lecturers presented with a diversity of experience, including having taught international and domestic students. Two had experience teaching at universities in Asia and two had been international students.

Data collection methods

Students were interviewed twice to contrast initial and positioning findings and to ascertain if students had repositioned in the interim. For both interviews, approximately 25 ethics-approved questions were the guide. Each interview was audio recorded and lasted anywhere from 45 to 90 min. Similar wording was used to eliminate bias (Gall et al. 1996). The second round of interview questions determined if a student had repositioned, meaning their attitudes and perspectives markedly changed in the 6 months between interviews. Little transitioning in perspective was observed amongst participants between initial and positioning interviews. However, if repositioning did occur it was generally due to the influence of peers. The academics participated in a single interview.

Analysis of collected data

Analysis of semi-structured in-depth interviews with academic and student participants was undertaken using a trans-disciplinary framework. The trans-disciplinary framework represented an amalgamation of two existing theories, including Glaser and Strauss (1967) grounded theory with Harré and van Langenhove's (1999) positioning theory. For this research, the grounded theory adaptation, Auditable Systematised Qualitative Analysis (ASQA) was used to process interview data. The ASQA process was devised to overcome criticisms of grounded theory, including ambiguity in relation to the steps involved in analysis (Eaves 2001)

and concerns associated with the auditability of grounded theory research (Gasson 2004). The output resulting from the ASQA process, including categorised and codified qualitative data, was subjected to an interpretation of Harré and van Langenhove's positioning theory that created a model of the ontological reality of participants contained in the constructed reality (Charmaz 2000) of interview transcripts.

The rationale behind the interpretation of positioning theory was to allow the modelling of actors that position participants at ontological divisions in reality, including interpersonal, institutional and cultural levels of experience. Zelle (2009) describes these levels of experience as occurring on the micro, meso and macro planes. Participants' reality includes personal influences like family, peers and teachers at the micro or interpersonal division, corporations, including the university at the institutional or meso division and finally actors, including disruptive technologies, governments, philosophies and religions at the cultural or macro division. At all levels, actors located at the ontological divisions in a reality position through unidirectional discourse. At the interpersonal division, actors and participants engage in bidirectional or two-way discourse. At the heart of this representation is Harré and van Langenhove's concept of 'local moral order' and an attempt to demonstrate the rules underlying engagements in episodes of discourse, particularly among actors residing at different levels of the societal hierarchy.

An example of 'local moral order' through episodes of discourse (Harré and van Langenhove 1999) is presented in the findings of the domestic lecturer Catherine. Catherine was a lecturer who thought changing attitudes had led to a decline in student engagement and an intensification of the lecturing load, which had led her to wonder about the relevance of her teaching. Catherine was of the opinion staff morale had suffered through a decline in the quality of international students and interference by university administrators. For example, Catherine was disturbed that university administrators decreased the exam component of her subject without consultation. Catherine said:

... we did not have much choice about dropping the exam component. It was as though this was decided by the powers, you know up there. Therefore, you just accept it. From the school we made representations ... It was swept aside, so you just do what you are told.

Research findings

Several students interviewed for this research were aware of their economic importance to the Australian higher education sector and broader economy. A number of lecturers of CIS were concerned that commoditisation and dependence

on international student income had an impact on traditional lecturer and student relationships. The following five main themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews. Each layered theme goes across the levels of experience described by Zelle (2009). They vary across a spectrum of personal frustration to the realisation that the global economic market is a force beyond the influence of individual institutions. Quotes have been included to illustrate the findings.

Theme 1: the role of parents in the choice of international student placement

While the number of international students is demand driven, data collected in this research confirm parents of CIS influence the selection of host country. A reason parents want their children to study in the home country or abroad is to obtain a qualification (Miller 2010). Students indicated that the prospect for obtaining employment or permanent residency was a driving factor for their parents sending them abroad. Several students said, the reason their parents enrolled them at Australian institutions was because the education and employment environment was less competitive. Additionally, improving their child's English language capability through exposure to locals was a factor for parents when sending children abroad. The data indicate parents were not selective about the country they chose and Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States were all open to consideration. Once the country was selected, the reputation of the institution was important. According to students, the reputation of the institution is of particular importance among the peers of parents in the home country.

In support of the role parents have on CIS, lecturer Amanda said:

I have come across students who have spoken about the influence that their parents have on them, and the fact their parents have had to make sacrifices for them. They often want to honour their parents in the work they do while they [are] here.

For several parents improving their child's English proficiency through interacting with locals was another reason they chose Australia. Student Wai-tat said, 'I have improved my English, which is important to my parents'.

Other students considered this a reason why CIS parents chose Australia. In relation to why her mother had sent her and her brother to Australia So-ye said, 'She sent us here when we were young to improve our English and avoid the HKCEE ¹'.

¹ Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination

Theme 2: why students want to study abroad

Several CIS saw studying in Australia as a secondary option, behind studying in the home country. Students said they studied in Australia to avoid pressure from parents and because education and employment is competitive in their home country. Some students said they studied in Australia to obtain additional years of freedom from parental obligations. Students said they felt pressure from parents to perform in both individual subjects and overall, some students reported their parents used the amount of money they spent on their education as a performance motivator. There was also an attempt to reduce costs for parents by working and paying for items. Another motivating factor included parents losing face if the child returned without qualification. One student said the reason her parents wanted her to obtain a degree was to make up for their own lost opportunities.

Other reasons included the educational system in the home country. Student So-ye said, 'In Hong Kong, you read books, do the dictation and memorise content rather than knowing it. My mum does not like this, which is why she sent us overseas'. Student Teck-meng acknowledged that CIS often studied abroad because they had failed the entrance requirement in their home country. In support of this Tek-meng said, '... parents send their kids here to avoid the system in China or to get their kid to learn better English or they failed the exam in China'.

Theme 3: why choose Australia?

Students interviewed said they liked studying in Australia because the physical environment was better and local people were less rude. They appreciated low university contact hours and thought Australia has a relaxed working environment. Students perceived Australia to be less corrupt in relation to career opportunities. They also said they studied in Australia to avoid their home countries' teaching style.

In relation to choosing to study in Australia for reasons of employment and permanent residency, Student Ching-ya said, 'After I finish the masters, I will try to find a job in Australia. If I cannot I will go back to China. At this stage, I am not going to apply for permanent residence but I will try later'. Student Lie-ling said:

I intend to get a job. I hope it is a graduate position ... I hope to get a graduate position at an Australian bank. I am not sure if my degree will get me permanent residence or not, but permanent residence is an intention.

Theme 4: student and academic concurrence on the reasons students chose Australia

There is a correlation between the views of CIS and domestic lecturers in relation to the commoditisation of higher education. Like the students, several lecturers thought some CIS undertook business studies to obtain permanent residency or employment in Australia. Lecturers recognised that parents of CIS made substantial sacrifices to enable their children to study overseas. The lecturers recognised that Australia was one of several choices and for many the primary choice was to study in their home country.

On the question of permanent residency, lecturer Amanda said, 'There is a perception that there is a lack of accountability in industry and so it is a possibility of a good chance of getting a job ... I believe there is some sort of immigration call out for Accounting students'. Additionally, lecturer Karen said:

A large number of international students only come here to do Accounting for residency purposes or at least partially for residency purposes. They think Accounting is a great degree to have and whatever they do, Accounting will be useful and help them to stay in Australia.

The issue of needing to work and study was a concern to students and academics. Student Lie-ling said, 'Often people just want to get through school and work while they are here. They have an agent that helps them to find jobs like working two or three times per week'. However, Student Pui-lin indicated, successfully studying and working was a matter of time management, saying 'I have two jobs one at a nut shop and the other at a two-dollar store. I always find time to get my schoolwork done'. Lecturer Karen took a practical view of conflicting demands:

... students today work fulltime and study fulltime, which never happened in my day. You did your research because that is what you were there to do, but now they are just trying to pass to get a job and a degree is yet another hurdle, another hoop to jump through, rather than studying for the sake of learning.

Theme 5: lecturers' views on the impact on education outcomes and relationships of a market system

There was an agreement between lecturers concerning domestic university motivations. For example, lecturers thought English language capability was a determining factor in CIS success and that often universities lowered or accepted students below the required standard. Lecturers

concurred that there existed a view amongst some CIS that they had paid to study and were therefore entitled to a satisfactory outcome. This was an impediment to the relationship between lecturers and students. Some lecturers believed the pressures for CIS to pay high fees, family sacrifice and a need to work caused them to seek only passing grades.

For some students remaining at home and not studying or working was not an option. In acknowledgement of this student Wai-tat said, 'People want to have a good time while they are here. They know when they go home their parents will make them work'. Student Pui-lin concurred saying '... some students are not interested in learning and only come here to get a qualification or to please their parents. I know some students do come here to avoid work'. Some lecturers acknowledged that sometimes students only studied hard to fulfil the wishes of parents. Lecturer Amanda acknowledged this, saying 'Often international students will try to get high marks because of family pressure or whatever'. However, some lecturers were concerned by the motives of students that chose to study abroad to satisfy parents, because unmotivated students aimed to pass and not excel. On this lecturer Catherine said, 'Their attitude is I do not really need to get distinctions as long as I get a degree it is fine'.

Lecturer views correlated in relation to needing better resources to assist international students with issues other than English alone. Some lecturers thought that often CIS required one-to-one attention. Additionally, some lecturers thought the institution intervened in decision-making, lowered course requirements, decreased exam values and subject workloads. Several lecturers said course demands had decreased while they had been teaching to accommodate international students. This was of concern to a number of lecturers, who felt course material was compressed and vital components were left out to shorten course durations. Some even questioned whether the course they taught was worthwhile because at the end some students could only obtain clerical jobs. Lecturer Pheona, in relation to differing standards amongst international students said:

I just do not want them to repeat and give back to me what I have given them. I want them to think about it and be able to apply what they have learnt. I think sometimes there might be significant learning differences between students from particular countries and this might influence their attitudes towards performance.

Lecturers were also practical, recognising that international students represented a necessary market, providing income to institutions and even their own jobs. Lecturers knew Australia must embrace international students as lost income to Australia would affect educational institutions and diminish job opportunities. Therefore, some lecturers were

realistic about perceived changes in academic standards. Lecturer Karen said:

... education is a global market and we cannot afford to ignore this global market. If we ignore it from a commercial perspective then the UK, the US or other countries and universities are going [to] take up that market. We cannot do anything to stop the global tide of billions of people from China wanting their children to be educated in English abroad. You are going to get people that will service this market because they need to make money in a capitalist society. You must take advantage of the market you have.

Some lecturers expressed a desire to understand the prior experiences of CIS, including standards in the home country, although they did not feel comfortable directing material and teaching strategies to any particular group. Informally lecturers engaged with students, recognising that some students preferred one-to-one assistance and after class clarification. Major issues for lecturers concerned language difficulties and lowered course standards. Additionally, often decisions to change course requirements came from others and not the lecturers themselves. One lecturer felt CIS were treated as customers due to marketing activities by Australian institutions engaging in a competitive market. This in turn changed CIS behaviour and expectations in relation to their Australian education.

Discussion and implications

For this research, we asked the question: How is commoditisation and internationalisation of higher education perceived by academics and students?

It appears domestic lecturers charged with educating international students in Australia have been dealt a difficult hand. At the macro level (Zelle 2009) the federal government, driven by a neo-liberal agenda, has reduced funding for higher education (Chen 2008; Caluya et al. 2011; Azmat et al. 2013; Ekanayake and Jackling 2014). At the meso level, university administrators acting like CEOs of corporations make up shortfalls by increasing their intake of fee-paying international students (Devlin et al. 2008; Gribble and Blackmore 2012). Commoditisation of higher education contains several facets and influences CIS decisions concerning educational expectations and aspirations. Education as a commodity can be seen as a credential, a skills model, a consumption model (Miller 2010) or a combination of all three. On the micro level, this can lead to a lack of commitment by some CIS to their studies and a corresponding lack of commitment by university administrators to the provision of a quality education for all, accompanied with a decline in support for teaching staff.

Domestic lecturers realise that international students study in Australia for a variety of reasons and that the attainment of education is not always primary. From the field of Business Studies some lecturers said the majority of students they taught were internationals and that a major reason some CIS chose to study in Australia was to obtain permanent residency. Accordingly, the quality of courses taught was lowered by university administrators to cater for a decline in the English language capabilities of some international students or that some CIS only attempted to obtain a qualification to fulfil the demands of parents. Conversely, Karen thought the decline in standards was due to some CIS studying while simultaneously working long hours to reduce parental costs. Selection officers were criticised for enrolling inappropriately skilled students in relation to their English language standard. These issues may have future ramifications in relation to issues of warranty in higher education as identified by Svensson and Wood (2007):

The next logical step will be litigation by a student from whom universities have taken their money and whom the university system has admitted to a degree and who may claim poor performance on the part of the university. It may be that the student is unable to complete the degree, because they may not have the intellectual capital to do so or the university may not have provided what the student deems to be sufficient for them to complete their degree (p. 26).

However, it now seems unlikely that this observation by Svensson and Wood (2007) that poorly performing students will litigate against an institution for failing to obtain a degree will prove true. Instead, it appears that these authors made this observation in expectation that academic standards and course quality would remain static. Instead, universities have avoided wide-scale litigation by jilted full fee-paying international student families by simultaneously lowering academic requirements to meet the declining standards of students as identified by the lecturers interviewed in this research. If there is a decline in the quality of courses, as perceived by the lecturers of CIS due to a decline in the educational aptitude of some CIS studying in Australia, then there are implications for domestic students that study alongside internationals. Unfortunately, there is paucity in the literature concerning the impact an increased intake of international students has on domestic student outcomes.

Conclusion

In this paper, we drew together concerns and issues faced by domestic educators and CIS surrounding the commoditisation and internationalisation of higher education occurring in Australia today. This research shows that although

particular issues maybe more relevant to domestic educators than international students, concerns are not mutually exclusive. Both educators and students have overlapping concerns surrounding studying for residency or that CIS are now seen as consumers of a product. In contrast, issues including accommodation, safety and level of sacrifice required by some CIS and their families maybe of greater concern to domestic institutions. From the international students' perspective, being only a paying client of the Australian higher education system means that students often have expectations of successful outcomes regardless of effort. Likewise as direct employees of the educational institution and indirect employees of fee-paying students there is pressure on domestic educators to pass students or the clients of a commoditised educational product.

To conclude, stakeholders, including academics and students in this research engaged in discourse about their unique perceptions of their experience in higher education at a particular historical time. Positioning theory was used to identify the narratives participants told about themselves, including the imperatives they saw directing their actions. We referred to Harré and van Langenhove's (1999) understanding of local moral order. If local moral order, rights, obligations and acts are at play in this story then all participants are conflicted as their stories intercept. Personal gain, profits and education as a common good make uneasy bedfellows.

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