1. Introduction

I recommend that international students take advantage of all the services available to them such as tutors, learning support services, help from lecturers and so on. (Karolina – student, QUT, 2009)

As a student in a tertiary institution you will almost certainly be involved in what has become known as international education. This can happen in a number of ways. You may attend a class in your own home country or locality where you study alongside students from around the world. You may choose to gain your academic qualifications through studying in another country with an unfamiliar cultural and geographical context. You may have a study period abroad as part of your study programme. In today’s globalized world you cannot avoid ‘international’ education. What is important is how to benefit from this experience whatever form it takes. And that is what this book is about.

International education around the world has grown exponentially in recent years. Tertiary education around the world now has an increasing mix of domestic and international students in classes. Many Western countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Canada provide education for significant numbers of foreign students from an increasingly diverse range of countries. They teach in English and use a ‘Western’ educational philosophy. This can raise a number of issues for students whose first language is not English or who have experienced a different approach to education and the acquisition of knowledge.

Similar problems can arise when students from ‘Western’ countries choose to spend some part of their study period in a different culture. Both of these trends mean that any tertiary classroom is likely to be made up of people from very different backgrounds.

Below is a list of the countries which welcome the most international students and the top source countries for their international students in 2005:

- USA. The top five source countries are India, China, South Korea, Japan and Canada. These five countries make up 46 per
cent of the foreign students studying in higher education in the USA.

- UK. The top five non-EU source countries are China, the USA, India, Malaysia and Hong Kong. These students make up 49 per cent of the non-EU foreign students.

- Australia. The top five source countries, are China, India, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Indonesia. These students make up 56 per cent of the total foreign students.

- Canada. The top five source countries include China, the USA, France, India and South Korea. They make up 46 per cent of foreign students studying in Canada.

- New Zealand. The top five source countries include China, South Korea, Japan, the USA and India. These make up 80 per cent of foreign student numbers in New Zealand (AEI.dest.gov.au/AEI/Publications & Research n.d.).

As can be seen from the above figures, despite the overall diversity of countries whose citizens travel to study, these five primary English language destinations are drawing from many of the same source countries, in particular China and India where economic growth is still strong. Without considering the wide range of countries that make up the other ‘50 per cent’, the diversity of culture, education systems and world-view apparent within these primary source countries is considerable.

If you are a student from one of these host countries you will meet up with students from around the world in your tertiary classroom. They may make you feel uncomfortable with their different approach or their slower spoken English. They are, however, a valuable resource for those of you who are not able to travel overseas as they bring the world, its perspectives and attitudes to you. Take the time to overcome the superficial barriers that language and culture present in the classroom. This book will help you.

About 1.6 million students study outside their home country every year and of those over 500 000 study in the US (Mazzarol and Hosie, cited in Avirutha et al. 2005). Education is the third-largest export in Australia (Marginson 2002), with over 100 000 foreign students studying at Australian universities in 2000. It is predicted that this number will rise to over 500 000 by 2020 (IDP 2002).

If you have chosen to study in one of these major Western providers of tertiary education, this book will help you understand the expectations often present in English language-based tertiary education. Things will be different, but this book will help you understand the processes used and how to do well within this system.
ADVANTAGES OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

One of the primary advantages of studying abroad is to learn a new culture and adapt to a new learning environment through real-life experiences (Rhee and Danowitz Sagaria 2004; Avirutha et al. 2005). This is increasingly important whatever discipline you are studying as there is every chance that you will eventually work across a range of countries and cultures, or with people from a range of different backgrounds. Cross-cultural understanding will have an impact on your effectiveness as a professional in an increasingly global environment. Therefore, in the classroom you have the opportunity to learn not only from the lecturer but also from your fellow students, who may come from very different cultural backgrounds to yourself. In the classroom you have the opportunity of mixing with, and learning from, people who have experienced and understand places that have cultures very different from your own. This will offer new insights and new solutions to problems that would be difficult to acquire in a monocultural context.

It is important to remember that Australia, the USA, the United Kingdom and many of the other Western host countries of international students are themselves extremely culturally diverse communities, but that tertiary education remains essentially monocultural in form and Anglo-American in content (De Cieri and Olekalns 2001). That means there are particular philosophies that put an emphasis on student autonomy, on participatory teaching and learning strategies and content from a ‘Western’ perspective. This may not be what you have experienced in the past. If you are a student undertaking study abroad, particularly in a non-Western education system, you may be equally challenged by the different processes you experience there. There is a special chapter in the book (Chapter 3) on studying abroad and adjusting to cultural difference in a very short space of time (for example one semester).

It is not always possible to travel abroad for your education. In these circumstances it is even more important to learn from those around you. The term ‘internationalization at home’ has been coined for a phenomenon defined as: ‘The process of integrating an international dimension into the research, teaching and services function of higher education’ (Knight 1993).

This definition does not inform us of how this process occurs in different universities. The term ‘internationalization at home’ has not caught on, but the process of internationalizing the curriculum, services and reach of the university has grown at a great pace. The increase in international competition for students has driven this process of internationalization. It is important that tertiary institutions provide for all their students. But there has also been an increasing realization that all students will need to understand
more about the global environment and different cultural practices and attitudes if they are to be successful in an increasingly global world.

CHALLENGES OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Many of you who study in Western universities may want to understand the ‘Western’ way of doing things, but may not be familiar or comfortable with the processes used to facilitate learning (Pincas 2001). Business classrooms traditionally use a range of Western teaching and learning strategies that focus on critical analysis, oral discussion, problem-solving and the possibility of multiple solutions, using case studies and discussion groups that require active participation by the students, which many international students find unfamiliar. Many of the chapters of this book will address how you can develop the skills necessary to benefit from these ways of teaching and learning.

You all come to the tertiary classroom with a set of behaviours and characteristics that make you unique (Jones 2005). You have your own expectations arising from the educational practices of your home communities. It is important for you to think about what it is you are hoping to learn. Why have you chosen to attend the particular institution you are enrolled with? Are you looking to learn a foreign language? Do you want to use your newly acquired skills in your own country, in the country in which you are studying, or somewhere else? Understanding exactly what it is you want to achieve can greatly help you get the best out of the international experience both within and without the classroom.

REFLECTION

Think about what you would like to know about other countries, perhaps ones that you hope to work in or visit. Other students around you may have similar aspirations. You are an ‘expert’ on your locality so you have very valuable information and understanding to share. Be willing to share it. You may be the only person in your class with your particular ethnic, cultural or national background. This is valuable.

In classrooms with students from Europe, North and South America, Asia, India, Africa and Australia, the potential for intercultural understanding and skills development is enormous. But it won’t happen by
accident. You need to make opportunities to mix with students from other
countries. If you belong to the host community, ask international students
to join in your activities outside of the university. If you are the visiting
student, find the courage to get to know your host community. It can seem
very difficult, particularly if you do not share a common language, but it
is worth the effort.

UNDERSTANDING THE LEARNING PROCESS

Each of us, wherever we come from, has our preferred way of learning.
We have had our preference reinforced by the methods used in our home
countries, but equally you may find that the different teaching and learn-
ing methods you face, whilst a little daunting to start with, help you learn
well.

According to the visual–auditory–kinaesthetic learning style model
(VAK), most people possess a dominant or preferred learning style;
however, some people have a mixed and evenly balanced blend of the
three styles. This model provides a very easy and quick reference inven-
tory to help you understand your preferred learning style and help you
choose learning experiences that will be positive for you. It will also
help you understand that different people learn differently, and there-
fore many different teaching and learning practices might be used in the
classroom.

● A visual learning style means that you may learn more quickly
through the use of seen or observed things, including pictures, dia-
grams, demonstrations, displays, handouts, films, flip-charts, and
so on.

● An auditory learning style means that you like to learn through lis-
tening: to the spoken word, to self or others, to sounds and noises.

● A kinaesthetic learning style means that you learn best through
physical experience: touching, feeling, holding, doing, practical
hands-on experiences.

Below is a simple test to help you assess your preferred learning style. It is
simply an indicator of preferred learning styles.

VAK Self-Assessment

Score each statement in Table 1.1 and then add the totals for each column
to indicate your learning style dominance and mix. Your learning style is
Table 1.1 VAK self-assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>When operating new equipment for the first time I prefer to . . .</td>
<td>Read the instructions</td>
<td>Listen to or ask for an explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>When seeking travel directions I . . .</td>
<td>Look at a map</td>
<td>Ask for directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>When cooking a new dish I . . .</td>
<td>Follow a recipe</td>
<td>Call a friend for explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I tend to say . . . 'I see what you mean'</td>
<td>'I hear what you are saying'</td>
<td>‘Tell me’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I tend to say . . . 'Show me'</td>
<td>'I hear what you are saying'</td>
<td>‘Tell me’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I prefer these leisure activities:</td>
<td>Museums or galleries</td>
<td>Music or conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Choosing a holiday I . . .</td>
<td>Read the brochures</td>
<td>Listen to recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Choosing a new car I . . .</td>
<td>Read the reviews</td>
<td>Discuss with friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Learning a new skill I . . .</td>
<td>Watch what the teacher is doing</td>
<td>Talk through with the teacher exactly what I am supposed to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I remember things best by . . .</td>
<td>Writing notes or keeping printed details</td>
<td>Saying them aloud or repeating words and key points in my head or listening to a recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I feel especially connected to others because of . . .</td>
<td>How they look</td>
<td>What they say to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>When I revise for an exam, I . . .</td>
<td>Write lots of revision notes</td>
<td>Talk over the material with other people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>When explaining something to someone, I tend to . . .</td>
<td>Show them what I mean</td>
<td>Explain to them in different ways until they understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>My main interests are:</td>
<td>Photography, reading, watching films or people-watching</td>
<td>Listening to music or listening to the radio or talking to friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I find it easiest to remember . . .</td>
<td>Faces</td>
<td>Names</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Victoria Chislett MSc and Alan Chapman 2005.
also a reflection of the type of person you are – how you perceive things and the way that you relate to the world. This questionnaire helps you to improve your understanding of yourself and your strengths. There are no right or wrong answers.

Add up your scores. Column A shows a visual preference, Column B an auditory preference and column C a kinaesthetic preference. The higher your score, the greater your preference for this means of learning.

This is only a quick quiz but can help you understand what you need to do to help you earn. It is rough guide only. It can also help you understand others who you work and learn with.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

This book is aimed at three groups of tertiary students and those who help them to learn.

Group One is students from around the world who engage in cross-border education in one of the many English-speaking nations who encourage participation by international students. They are generally referred to as international students and study outside their home country for an extended period of time – usually a year or more. It is assumed that these students will be studying in a Western-oriented institution where English is the language of instruction.

Group Two is students from Western English-speaking nations who choose to do part of their study in a different cultural and geographical location. They are generally referred to as study abroad or exchange students.

Group Three is students who are studying in English-speaking classrooms in their own countries and are joined by fellow students from a range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. They are frequently referred to as domestic students.

The book provides a theoretical background to intercultural teaching and learning and provides suggestions and examples of how to be successful in the global business classroom. It starts by providing examples of the issues that arise when there are linguistic and cultural differences in the classroom; when expectations may be different and the impact of culture, both in and out of the classroom, on learning may be significant. It explores the different teaching and learning challenges that arise in a Western classroom and offers suggestions for getting the best out of the methods used. Each chapter will provide examples of the ideas discussed, comments from past students and practical exercises that will help you improve your learning outcomes.
REMEMBER:

‘You learn from foreigners that there is more than one path to a goal. Effective wealth creation demands that we use all the paths available to us.’ (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars 1993: 16, cited in Sinclair and Wilson 1999: 27)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Coyne, David (2003), ‘Internationalisation at home and the changing landscape’, Internationalisation at Home Conference, Malmo University, April.
IDP Education Australia (2002), Global Student Mobility, Sydney: IDP.
Pincas, Anita (2001), ‘Culture, cognition and communication in global education’, *Distance Education, 22* (1), 30–51.