Chapter 10
Choosing the Right Pathway:
A Matrix of Influences Related to Selection of Higher Education Destination Abroad

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ABSTRACT

The Eynesbury Institute of Business and Technology (EIBT) is a pre-university pathway institution to the University of Adelaide or the University of South Australia. This chapter contributes to improving the understanding of the various factors that underpinned EIBT students’ decision with regards to choosing Australia, and more specifically Adelaide and EIBT, as their study destination. International student applicants are located within a complex matrix of influences that can be effectively represented by overlapping spheres of push (operating in the home country) and pull (operating in the host country) factors. As evidenced in the qualitative data collected from a mandatory online questionnaire targeted at newly enrolled EIBT students, international mobility not only contributes to the internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), but also impacts on the outlooks, subsequent lifestyles and future careers of the students themselves. Pathway institutions offer valuable partnerships for HEIs and this study contributes to that rather shallow body of knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

The international mobility of students not only contributes to the internationalisation of institutions, but also impacts on the outlooks, subsequent lifestyles, and future careers of the students themselves. Although internationalisation through study abroad is widely touted as a preferred means of developing globally competent Higher Education (HE) graduates, the (a) rising number of international students in search of HE, and the (b) inclusion of new countries as potential destinations, have increased the need for understanding the behaviour of student consumers from an international perspective.

The decision to study overseas is one of the most significant and potentially expensive initiatives that a student may undertake (Cubillo, Sánchez, & Cerviño, 2006; Mazzarol, 1998). The high costs of studying abroad make it a complex decision that is likely to involve deep(er) deliberation. Rationales

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underpinning student migration to Western countries—especially Australia—are well documented, including the factors that they consider important in their decision-making. Studies have been underpinned by a combination of Push-Pull factors/indicators that affect students’ decision-making (e.g., Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Li & Bray, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Push factors tend to be economic or political aspects that play a role in choice of country. Pull factors, on the other hand, such as institutional reputation, international recognition of qualification, teaching quality and locational features also exert influence on specific institutional choice.

For the purpose of this chapter, there is scant literature on pre-university ‘pathway’ international students’ study abroad decision-making processes. This work contributes to bridging that gap. Pathway institutions offer valuable partnerships for the HE sector and it is beneficial to conduct research into this division in order to strengthen and improve the overall ‘international student’ experience. This chapter also contributes to improving the understanding of the various factors that underpin students’ decision-making with regards to choosing a study destination. This knowledge is key to formulating effective communication and recruitment strategies for HE Institutions (HEIs) to attract international students. Motivational divergences have important implications for strategic student marketing, recruitment, transition, orientation and retention.

Throughout this presentation, the term ‘international students’ or ‘students’ is specific to individuals enrolled in the Eynesbury Institute of Business and Technology (EIBT) on temporary student visas and who are almost exclusively Non-English Speaking Background (NESB).

**BACKGROUND**

Part of the Navitas Group, EIBT was founded in 1998 and has since established a strong profile for pre-university pathways. Specific to this research are the students who enter EIBT to undertake a Diploma in:

1. Business;
2. Information Technology; or
3. Engineering, packaged with *The University of Adelaide* or the *University of South Australia*.

EIBT recruitment is predominantly directed towards full fee-paying international students who:

1. Have completed Year 11 high school in Australia and would prefer to continue their studies in a different academic context;
2. Have completed Year 12 high school in Australia, but did not obtain an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR score) sufficient for direct entry into university;
3. Have graduated from high school abroad, but whose English language proficiency did not meet the minimum requirement for direct entry into university;
4. Have graduated from high school abroad, but whose academic results did not meet the minimum requirement for direct entry into university; or
5. Are above 20 years of age with a relevant employment history (Velliaris & Willis, 2014a; Velliaris, Willis, & Breen, 2015).
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