

Credit mobility- a broader future: Benefits, barriers, and benchmarking



I am very pleased to welcome you to the University of Auckland for a day of discussions on student mobility. I entered the field of international education as an academic designing curriculum for new business schools in France in the 1990s, during the buildup of the Erasmus program. During this time, international moved to the forefront of the rankings. AACSB, the US accrediting

body for business schools, made its first accrediting forays abroad and EFMD, the European Foundation for Management Development, created the EQUIS label in response. The international makeup of the academic staff, the representation of foreign students in the student body, and the mobility opportunities for students, as part of their degree plan, entered the league tables and drew significant media attention. I remember the shift as I no longer needed to pitch the 'why' in student meetings. I would grab the newspaper on the way into Paris in the morning, hold it up at the start of the presentation and ask if anyone wanted to discuss why international skills were important. That was a given. The students just wanted to know how. I was asked to lead a crazy idea to mandate international education in the first mainstream business school to do so in France. We went from 10% to 98% participation in just three years. There was a lot of work done with academic staff, students, their parents, alumni, the media, and government stakeholders.

During that time, as we rapidly expanded our mobility capacity, primarily through exchanges, I remember the inevitable Australian response. "OE is something we do before or after uni, not as part of higher education. But we'll take your credit students on a fee-paying basis." It was a frustrating discourse for all and in IE circles, Australia wore a big scarlet \$ sign, openly admitting that for them, IE was all about the revenue.

Mobility helps our export education brand

That has changed substantially. I was asked to address the first meeting of the mobility interest group at the annual Australian conference in 2004. 2005 saw the first benchmark on outbound mobility. The data was pretty shaky in the early years but gained in stability as institutions retooled to identify the breadth of activity that was going on. It turned out that there had been a generational shift and students were interested in learning overseas as part of their university experience. The data helped the sector advocate with government and the OS- Help loan scheme was created. In addition, institutions dedicated significant funding and, later,

the government launched the New Colombo Plan. In just ten years, Australia grew outbound participation fivefold and surpassed US participation rates. This has significantly changed their brand in market circles. They've moved from the money-grabbing sales force to a perception of capacity to partner and contribute. Australians opened the Latin American market by working through policy for dual degrees. Exchanges are not at the heart of the mobility as there remains a considerable gap of level between some of the leading institutions on this side of the world and those in the developing world. But there is demonstrated commitment to partner with the sector in key markets. This has a very direct impact on their ability to recruit degree students from these same markets.

We see a similar trend in the other Main English Speaking Destinations. Even the UK, has moved from its age-old position that only language students would study abroad.

New Zealand is not Australia. And many of our students already have significant opportunity to develop intercultural skills right here on-shore. After all, nearly half the workforce in Auckland was born overseas. We are perceived in many markets as a country that has given much more than lip service to the values of multiculturalism. *So why does this matter to us?*

The non-award segment is an important part of our mix but has different settings on some key parameters. Credit mobility is a characteristic of mature higher education systems and often occurs among developed world countries (West to West mobility)¹. The overseas experience is promoted for a broader education as part of the degree in the home country. While full-degree mobility is sometimes called 'vertical mobility', the credit mobility market is one of 'horizontal mobility'. Compared to full-degree students, study abroad students are very price sensitive, less concerned with rankings, and looking for an intense overall educational experience with a significant level of co-curricular services and options². In a nutshell, they're looking for the same thing our outbound students are seeking. So as we diversify our outbound product line, in order to meet our own students' desires to incorporate an international learning experience into their university degree, we will also improve our ability to collaborate with partner universities, particularly in the developed world, thereby enhancing our brand and our share of a market segment that enjoys the highest conversion rates in our mix.

¹ Waechter, B., (2013). The drivers of mobility. Presented at the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) Conference, The Hague, June 9-11, 2013.

² Idem.

In my comments today, I want to raise the potential **benefits** of credit mobility to students, institutions, and society, as well as look at the main **barriers** to mobility – the 3 cs: Credit, Culture, and Cost.



Student Demand: *It's not your Dad's study abroad.*

Today's generation want to make a difference. From GenX to Y, on to millennials, and Rob Lawrence's³ recent report on Generation Global, there is a wealth of analyses that

shine a light on the motivations of today's young people. I've got 3 uni-age children who've studied in France, China, Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia, so I've got some first-hand, if biased, perspective on this, in addition to my professional work. Academic staff in universities, administrators, the general public, and the media, have a hard time getting their head around the mobility patterns of this generation. I recently gave an interview to North South magazine on mobility and the well-respected reporter called me back 5 times to try to understand it. In the end, she stuck with 'exchanges = mobility', not grasping what I was trying to tell her about how much things had changed from our generation. We're sending over 1,000 students a year overseas from the University of Auckland, only a third of that is for a semester exchange, which is the only national data previously available. Today's students want shorter experiences, more highly engineered to achieve the learning goals, and if possible, with activities where they can feel they're making a difference in the world. Our students want the same thing as the students in the developed world we attract to study abroad with us. Product innovation for outbound will help us lift our game for inbound, and vice-versa. Credit mobility in both directions is in sync with government goals and brings a synergy that leverages our efforts towards a greater impact.

Institutions. *From soft power to knowledge diplomacy.*

The junior year abroad began as an American version of the British 'grand tour of Europe', a sort of finishing school for the culturally elite. From the second world war, as America exited its isolationist stance and realized the importance of international relations, government began funding foreign language study. Kennedy is perhaps the most visible leader to have clearly articulated the value of cross-cultural understanding. Soft power was an important arm in the cold war. Economic competitiveness and trade rose to the forefront subsequently. The 1980s saw several key moments in mobility. The Dawkins reforms opened the Australian market. The Erasmus program was created, still the most successful mobility program we have seen. The US

³ Lawrence, Rob. (2014). Global Citizens: Perspectives of Generation Gs. International Education Association of Australia. Discussion Paper 2b. Fostering Global Citizenship and Global Competence: A National Symposium.

launched its first effort to report on outbound credit mobility⁴ in 1987 and Milton Bennett published the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, which is still today at the core of US mobility goals. The concept of ‘global citizenship’ appears somewhere in the mission or vision statements of most US universities. Jane Knight has been writing recently to reflect on ‘soft power’ as a strategy aiming for dominance and self-interest. She has proposed the concept of knowledge diplomacy⁵.

Here in New Zealand, the national rhetoric has exemplary clarity in its focus on the revenue contribution to the economy. Recent iterations, such as in the 2015 Business Growth Agenda have begun to temper this: *Ensuring New Zealanders are equipped with the international capabilities, readiness and competitiveness required for the global economy is essential. Our future workforce needs a greater understanding of the cultures and languages of our key markets in order to effectively work with them.*

However, we are considerably behind the field, and even Australia, in presenting a balanced picture of benefit and contribution. Clearly, IE is a major component of the country’s talent acquisition strategy but the simplistic messaging on IE does not position us as partners to build educational capacity with the developing world. Neither does it address the worrisome gap in the general public’s understanding of these strategies.

Employability. Employers value the skills acquired not the OE itself.

As the Berlin wall came down, the rhetoric shifted to emphasize individual competitiveness. It is still deemed important for the country’s economy to be able to handle foreign trade, but increasingly our rhetoric is that international experience is necessary for individuals to have successful careers. To quote Michelle Obama, *“study abroad is quickly becoming the key to success in our global economy.”*

According to the Collegiate Employment Research Institute at Michigan State⁶, running one of the largest career trends surveys identifying what U.S. employers are looking for in young college graduates, study abroad can help students accelerate the development of skills that employers are looking for.

- Being resourceful and flexible

⁴ Institute for International Education. Open Doors 2015. New York, NY: Institute for International Education.

⁵ Knight, J. (2015). Moving from Soft Power to Knowledge Diplomacy. *International Higher Education*, Number 80, Spring 2015.

⁶ Gardner, P., Gross, L., and Steglitz, I. (2008) Unpacking your Study Abroad Experience: Critical Reflection for Workplace Competencies. *CERI Research Brief*, 1 (1) Collegiate Employment Research Institute, Michigan State University.



Barriers. In launching the Generation Study Abroad movement in the US, which calls to double outbound mobility by 2020, the Institute for International Education summarized the 3 main barriers to mobility: Credit, Culture, Cost. Student demand is rising and they want to make a difference but they, and their parents, want to stay on track to their degree. If the programme does not offer credits that count towards the student’s degree, it’s not as valuable. We are behind the curve in front-loading credit recognition for mobility programmes.

Culture. I’ve mentioned previously the generational gap between our generation’s OE and the expectations and motivations of this generation. We have a lot of work to do to create a campus culture that understands and supports the range of options students have. The general public as well.

Cost. Finally, cost is a major barrier. Australia grew its participation rates quickly through substantial government and institutional funding to lower the cost to the student and aim for equitable access.

There is a growing national focus to increase access to international learning. Obama launched the 100,000 Strong China and later Latin America initiatives. Closer to home, the New Colombo Plan and our own Prime Minister’s Scholarship for Asia have had significant impact on increasing participation and shifting the focus from Europe and North America to our important trading partners.



Benchmark. KPIs matter. An important step to move the culture, is to get a handle on the activity that is already happening. For this reason, with support from ENZ, we have launched the first national benchmark study on outbound mobility. The benchmarking mantra is *“If it matters count it. If it’s counted, it matters.”* This is where our colleagues across the Tasman

began a decade ago. Their efforts have had a major impact on how Australians define the university experience. It has also brought them into a more mature phase of internationalization, where they are taken seriously as more than just revenue seekers. The work has informed their broad internationalization strategy while also contributing to the economic goals of the government. StudyMove won the bid for this project and Keri will now give you an overview.



Conclusion. In conclusion, our students want credit mobility experiences. Our employers want the skills that can be gained from these experiences. Our economy needs the increased connectedness with our most important trade partners. To quote our PM: *we won't get rich by selling to ourselves*. But we need to address the barriers of credit, cost and culture by building greater awareness and understanding of modern mobility patterns. This will in turn bring direct benefit to our brand overseas and help modernize our image to one that includes real intentions to partner with key markets.

Our team has recently rebranded our outbound programmes as well as implemented a new information system to support outbound mobility. I know you'll be sharing ideas from strategy to coalface issues during the day. I wish you productive discussions.

Brett Berquist
Director International
The University of Auckland
b.berquist@auckland.ac.nz



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