

# ASIA: NZ RESEARCH

ASIA NEW ZEALAND FOUNDATION • BUILDING NEW ZEALANDERS' KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF ASIA

## TRACKING STUDY SERIES of Asian Business Graduates

REPORT 1

**AUTHORS:** Terry McGrath, Vivienne Anderson,  
Chze Pheng Ching, Akira Doi, Paul Stock,  
International Student Ministries of New Zealand Inc.

ISBN 978-0-9582964-6-5 (ONLINE PDF)



# CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	3
BACKGROUND	4
RESEARCH METHODS	7
PRELIMINARY FINDINGS	8
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION	8
WHY STUDY BUSINESS?	9
WHY STUDY IN NEW ZEALAND?	10
EXPERIENCES IN NEW ZEALAND	12
EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE	16
DISCUSSION	20
WHY STUDY BUSINESS?	20
WHY STUDY IN NEW ZEALAND?	20
EXPERIENCES IN NEW ZEALAND	21
FUTURE EXPECTATIONS	22
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS	22
RECOMMENDATIONS	23
APPENDIX:	
BUSINESS SCHOOLS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT (PHASE ONE)	24

*If you are viewing this document online the contents items are linked to the relevant page - click to quickly navigate to the relevant topic.*

*There is a 'contents' link at the bottom right for easy navigation back to the contents page.*

*All websites listed in this document are active hyperlinks and will open a page in your browser if you are connected to the internet.*

*Please note that in some cases figures featured in the supporting graphs may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**IN AUGUST 2008**, the Asia New Zealand Foundation (Asia:NZ) commissioned International Student Ministries of New Zealand to begin a three-year longitudinal tracking study of Asia-born New Zealand-trained business graduates. This study uses repeat surveys and in-depth interviews over three years (2008-2010) to examine the role that Asia-born New Zealand-trained business graduates play in the development of New Zealand-Asia business relationships.

This first report discusses preliminary findings from the initial online survey of 131 students and 40 in-depth interviews. It discusses four key questions:

- why students chose to study business;
- why New Zealand was chosen as a study destination;
- how students have experienced living and studying in New Zealand to date; and
- what their expectations are for the future.

### WHY CHOOSE BUSINESS?

Key reasons for choosing to study business were personal, familial and educational.

Personal reasons included career-related aspirations and a personal interest in business as an area of study. Familial reasons included parents' employment or encouragement from family and friends. Educational reasons included prior secondary or tertiary education experiences.

### WHY CHOOSE NEW ZEALAND?

Students chose to study in New Zealand owing to its English-language-based business courses; its relative affordability; its unique natural and human environment; and its difference as a study destination away from home.

Parental influence was a significant factor in students' choice of study destination, and a combination of factors seemed to shape parental perceptions of New Zealand. These included New Zealand's apparent safety, and contact with someone who lived in or had been to New Zealand.

### EXPERIENCES IN NEW ZEALAND

Most participants reported positive experiences in New Zealand. However, a key problem identified was difficulty in building relationships with locals. Participants who reported positive relations with New Zealanders emphasised that developing trust takes time and opportunities to prove one's trustworthiness. Opportunities identified included volunteer work, involvement in student and community organisations, and employment.

### EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Participants' expectations varied but for most centred on the desire to obtain a good or well paid job.

About half of the students desired permanent residency and to live and work in New Zealand, at least initially. Students expressed a strong interest in maintaining links with New Zealand and with those they had met during their time of study. Some spoke specifically about pursuing co-operative New Zealand-Asia business ventures between New Zealand and Asia.

Study findings to date suggest the importance of: communicating with both students and their parents when marketing business as a subject area; ensuring that New Zealand remains an affordable study destination for Asia-born students; recognising the value of personal links and the power of recommendation in attracting students to New Zealand; and working to support students' career pathways through work placement opportunities and fostering strategic allies.

The next stage of the study will explore how well students' expectations are realised post-graduation, and the role existing relationships play in their ongoing transition to work.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

---

ISM NZ:	International Student Ministries of New Zealand
PR:	Permanent residency: an immigration status that allows a person to live and work in New Zealand indefinitely with all the benefits of a New Zealand citizen. Eligibility for PR is determined on the basis of an individual's 'points' (based on employment, education, age and other factors)
PRC:	People's Republic of China
UK:	United Kingdom
USA:	United States of America

## INTRODUCTION

---

**IN AUGUST 2008 ASIA:NZ** commissioned International Student Ministries of New Zealand (ISM NZ) to commence a nationwide longitudinal study of the experiences of Asia-born New Zealand-trained business graduates. This study aims to achieve the following:

- to commence when students are in the final phases of their courses and contemplating the step beyond graduation;
- to follow the new graduates through their post-academic transitions as they endeavour to find employment and adjust to working in New Zealand or elsewhere; and
- to examine the role that Asia-born business graduates play in developing and maintaining New Zealand-Asia relationships.

We are specifically interested in graduates' adjustment experiences immediately following graduation; their transition to new employment; and in their living contexts in New Zealand, in their former countries of origin, or elsewhere.

This first report of our three-year study intends to do three things:

- provide a rationale for the study;
- outline its methodology and progress to date; and
- discuss its ongoing direction.

The first section includes background information, situating the study in terms of the New Zealand tertiary education and business education contexts, and in relation to existing literature on Asian students in New Zealand.

The second section outlines the research methods central to the study, and describes what has been accomplished to date.

The third section examines preliminary research findings, with a specific focus on students' expectations of study and life after study. This section draws on students' retrospective reflections and expectations of the future, providing a background for later reports (which will examine students' post-graduation transition pathways).

The final section discusses how emerging questions will be examined in the remainder of the study.

## BACKGROUND

**STUDENTS IDENTIFYING AS 'ASIAN'**<sup>1</sup> are the fastest-growing minority group in New Zealand's tertiary education sector. In the New Zealand Census, Statistics New Zealand defines 'Asian' in two primary ways: birthplace and ethnicity. Not everyone who is born in Asia will identify as being Asian, but many Asians who are born in New Zealand will. While many of the Asian students in tertiary education will be international full-fee-paying students, an increasing number are also New Zealand-born Asians. According to the New Zealand Ministry of Education,<sup>2</sup> Asian students comprise almost one-fifth (17 percent) of the total tertiary student population, and are close behind Maori students (18 percent) as the largest minority group. One-third of Asian students in tertiary education are enrolled as international students; the majority of these on a full-fee-paying basis.<sup>3</sup> Asian students make up two-thirds of the total international student population and 12 percent of domestic students in New Zealand tertiary education.<sup>4</sup>

The presence of Asians in New Zealand is not a new phenomenon. The earliest Chinese migrants came to New Zealand alongside British migrants in the early 1800s.<sup>5</sup> Since the 1950s, the majority of international students in New Zealand have come from the Asian region.<sup>6</sup> During the 1980s, major social and economic policy changes occurred in New Zealand, particularly in immigration policy (in 1986) and in education policy (1989). These changes coincided with the rapid growth of many Asian economies, and an associated increase in Asian migration and movement overseas for study purposes.<sup>7</sup>

Two outcomes were a rapid increase in New Zealand's Asia-born resident population, and the emergence and growth of New Zealand's 'export education industry'. The latter was driven largely by the enrolment of full-fee-paying Asian students, in particular from the People's Republic of China (PRC).<sup>8</sup>

New Zealand is not alone as a viable and appealing living and/or study destination for Asia-born people. Although New Zealand has only a tiny proportion of the world's international student population, it stands out as a national economy for its reliance on revenue generated through education exports.<sup>9</sup> Most of this revenue comes from the enrolment of Asian international full-fee-paying students.

Currently in New Zealand, business students constitute about 30 percent of the total Bachelor-level student roll.<sup>10</sup> While it is difficult to give the precise number of Asian students engaged in tertiary-level business study at all levels in New Zealand, the majority of business students are enrolled in Bachelor-level courses.<sup>11</sup> These statistics are instructive in terms of this study, since most students in this research were completing Bachelor-level qualifications. About 30 percent of Bachelor-level business students in New Zealand identify as Asian (around 30,700 students),<sup>12</sup> and of these, approximately 40 percent are enrolled as international (full-fee-paying) students.

1 We recognise that 'Asian' as a catch-all term for a diverse group of people is problematic and open to multiple interpretations. However, we use it throughout this report for practical purposes, recognising its limitations.

2 Ministry of Education. (2009a). Tertiary education statistics, provider-based enrolments. Downloaded May 26, 2009 from the Education Counts website: [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary\\_education/participation](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary_education/participation)

3 Ministry of Education (2009b). Personal communication, February 24 2009

4 Ministry of Education (2009a).

5 Ip, M., & Pang, D. (2005). New Zealand Chinese identity: Sojourners, model minority and multiple identities. In J. H. Liu, T. McCreanor, T. McIntosh & T. Teaiwa (Eds.), *New Zealand Identities: Departures and Destinations* (pp. 174-190). Wellington: Victoria University Press.

6 See Nicholas Tarling (2004). *International Students in New Zealand: The making of policy since 1950*. Auckland: New Zealand Asia Institute, University of Auckland.

7 Bedford, R., Ho, E., & Lidgard, J. (2001). Immigration policy and New Zealand's development into the 21st century: Review and speculation. *Asia and Pacific Migration Journal*, 10 (3-4), 585-616; also Ong, A. (1999). *Flexible Citizenship: The cultural logics of transnationality*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

8 Butcher, A. (2004). Educate, consolidate, immigrate: Educational immigration in Auckland, New Zealand. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 45(2), 255-278.

9 Lewis, N. (2005). Code of practice for the pastoral care of international students: making a globalising industry in New Zealand. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 3(1), 5-47.

10 This figure is calculated from aggregated statistics available on the Ministry of Education 'Education Counts' website: Ministry of Education. (2009c). Tertiary education statistics, provider-based enrolments: field of study. Downloaded June 3, 2009 from the Education Counts website: [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary\\_education/participation](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary_education/participation).

11 Ministry of Education. (2007a). *The International Education Agenda: A strategy for 2007-2012*. Wellington: Ministry of Education. Note that we include as 'business' courses those relating to management, commerce, information technology, economics and econometrics.

12 This figure is calculated from figures provided by the Ministry of Education in response to a query to the 'Education Counts' website.

Although not all Asian students in Bachelor-level business programmes were necessarily born in Asia,<sup>13</sup> the evident over-representation of Asian students and especially Asian international students in business courses is perhaps not surprising, given the increasing importance of Asian economies (in particular, the PRC and India) as key players in international business. How the current global recession will shape business enrolments, Asian and other students' subject choices, and Asian international students' study preferences remains open to question. Scholars and policy-makers alike have highlighted the significance to New Zealand business of positive networks between the peoples of Asia and New Zealand.<sup>14</sup> For example, McGrath *et al* describe two principles that Asian graduates in New Zealand have highlighted as fundamental to enhancing and building positive interpersonal relationships: "relationship or *guan xi*" – long-lasting relationships built on mutual trust; and "relevance or *guan lian*" – relationships built on mutual relevance.

Examining the extent to which such relationships exist between Asian business graduates and New Zealanders is a key focus of this study. Anecdotally, it appears that long-lasting and mutually relevant relationships were fostered from the 1950s through New Zealand's involvement in the Colombo Plan. As McGrath *et al* note, "Colombo Plan graduates became a conduit for ongoing goodwill between Asia and New Zealand".<sup>16</sup>

Whatever the relationships formed, Rizvi credits the Colombo Plan with facilitating the education of a "powerful élite in Asia" that were well disposed towards the countries in which they received their training.<sup>17</sup> Butcher and McGrath note that Colombo Plan graduates were instrumental in supporting the initial development of New Zealand's 'export education industry' through their recommendation of New Zealand as an education destination.<sup>18</sup>

Research suggests that building connections with New Zealanders is often the primary aim for Asian international students and migrant community members.<sup>19</sup> However, students' and migrants' expectations of social interaction with 'host community' members are often unmet. Many Asian international students report a lack of social interaction with New Zealanders,<sup>20</sup> and Asian migrants in New Zealand have high levels of unemployment.<sup>21</sup> Research exploring 'host community' attitudes suggests that racist or negative attitudes towards 'ethnically distinctive' migrant and international student populations are not uncommon.<sup>22</sup>

13 Asia-born business students are the specific focus of this study, as explained below.

14 For example, see Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2001). *The Colombo Plan at 50: A New Zealand perspective, 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Colombo Plan 1951-2001*. Wellington: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

15 McGrath, T., Stock, P., & Butcher, A. (2007). *Friends and Allies: The impacts of returning Asian students on New Zealand-Asia relationships*. Outlook paper 05. Wellington: Asia New Zealand Foundation (p. 16, emphasis original).

16 Ibid.

17 Rizvi, F (2004), *Globalisation and the dilemmas of Australian higher education*, ACCESS, 23(2),25

18 Butcher, A., & McGrath, T. (2004). International students in New Zealand: Needs and responses. *International Education Journal*, 5(4), 540-551.

19 Deloitte. (2008). *Experiences of International Students in New Zealand: Report 2007 on the Results of the National Survey*. Wellington: Ministry of Education; see also Ho, E. S., Li, W. W., Cooper, J., & Holmes, P. (2007). *The Experiences of Chinese International Students in New Zealand*. Retrieved August 31, 2007, from [http://www.educationnz.org.nz/indust\\_researchreports.html](http://www.educationnz.org.nz/indust_researchreports.html).

20 Berno, T., & Ward, C. (2003). *Cross-cultural and Educational Adaptation of Asian Students in New Zealand*. Wellington: Asia New Zealand Foundation; Ho et al. (2007); Ward, C. (2006). *International Students: Interpersonal, institutional and community impacts. Update of the 2001 literature review*. Wellington: Ministry of Education; Ward, C., & Masgoret, A. M. (2004). *The Experiences of International Students in New Zealand*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

21 Bedford et al. (2001).

22 Gendall, P., Spoonley, P., & Trlin, A. (2007). *The Attitudes of New Zealanders to Immigrants and Immigration: 2003 and 2006 compared*. Occasional publication No. 17. Palmerston North: New Settlers Programme, Massey University; Ward, C., Masgoret, A.-M., Ho, E., Holmes, P., Cooper, J., Newton, J., & Crabbe, D. (2005). *Interactions with International Students: Report prepared for Education New Zealand*. Retrieved May 19, 2006, from [www.educationnz.org.nz/eidrf/reports/A6.pdf](http://www.educationnz.org.nz/eidrf/reports/A6.pdf).

Although clearly, Asian international students and migrants in New Zealand may face real barriers to social integration and friendship with New Zealanders, research has also highlighted the ongoing significance of positive interpersonal connections that do occur. In recent research Asian international and domestic students described individual people whose warmth and friendship had facilitated their successful completion of academic courses in New Zealand, assisted them with the transition to work, and/or provided them with useful contacts and ongoing international connections.<sup>23</sup>

Our research examines Asian graduates' pathways post-graduation and their ongoing links with New Zealand and New Zealanders. It also addresses several gaps in New Zealand academic literature, including a lack of attention to graduate re-entry and/or transnational movement post-graduation; and a lack of research that considers Asian international students' and New Zealanders' study and living experiences alongside each other.<sup>24</sup>

Before outlining the study, it is necessary to explain our use of key terms throughout the report. Our focus is specifically on Asia-born students enrolled in or recently graduated from final-year study in New Zealand tertiary-level business programmes.

We include as 'business programmes' courses relating to information technology (including information systems and computer science), management and commerce (including accountancy, business and aviation management, sales and marketing, tourism, office studies, banking and finance), economics, and econometrics.<sup>25</sup> By 'Asia', we follow the geographical definition used by Asia:NZ: the broad region of the world bordered by Pakistan in the west and Japan in the east; the PRC in the north and Indonesia in the south.

Like 'Asian students' generally, Asia-born business students in New Zealand come from vastly diverse parts of the world, and include: both international and domestic students; students who identify with one or more than one ethnic group; and students from multiple linguistic, religious, economic and socio-geographical backgrounds. Our research findings are intended to expand rather than simplify discussions around Asia-born (and ethnically Asian) students in New Zealand tertiary-level business programmes. The findings are not intended to apply to all Asia-born students in tertiary education or to ethnically Asian students generally.<sup>26</sup>

23 Anderson, V. (2009). *The Experiences of International and New Zealand Women in New Zealand Higher Education*. Unpublished PhD thesis. Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago College of Education and Department of Anthropology.

24 The implications of this 'gap' for research, policy and tertiary teaching are discussed in Anderson (2009).

25 These areas of study are from the 'fields of study' listed on the Ministry of Education's 'Education Counts' website: [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary\\_education/participation](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary_education/participation).

26 For an insightful critique of writing that homogenises 'Asian students' in New Zealand, see: Collins, F. L. (2006). Making Asian students, making students Asian: The racialisation of export education in Auckland, New Zealand. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 47(2), 217-234.



## RESEARCH METHODS

**THE RESEARCH WAS COMMISSIONED IN AUGUST 2008.** Initially, most university business schools and some polytechnic<sup>27</sup> business schools were provided with an outline of the proposed project and were invited to participate in or facilitate our recruitment of eligible students in their programmes (for a list of the business schools involved, see [Appendix](#)). Those approached indicated their support for the study. In 2008, ethical approval was granted from the ISM NZ ethics committee and subsequently institutional-level ethics committees as required by the respective business schools involved. Active participant recruitment began in October 2008, or in some cases December 2008.

We employed two main methods of data collection: surveys and in-depth interviews. We piloted both the survey and interviews with members of the research team, student contacts and academics. All Asia-born students in their final year of study at New Zealand business schools or in their first year post-graduation were eligible for participation in the first phase of the study. We recruited students in three ways: through participating business schools (by referral and through posters in Chinese and English publicising the study);<sup>28</sup> through ISM NZ staff and student clubs/networks; and through peer referral. We invited all students to participate in both the survey and interview panel, but whether or not they did so was entirely voluntary. Informed consent was sought from each participant prior to data collection.

The initial online survey went live in March 2009 (<http://www.ism.org.nz/content/asian-business-graduate-survey>). The survey examined students' reasons for studying business and studying in New Zealand, their study and living experiences to date, and their expectations for the future.

One hundred and thirty-one students who fit our study's eligibility criteria have completed the initial survey. Our ambition is that this will increase to include 300 participants, although numbers for the initial survey exceeded the agreed target minimum (120 students). We offered an incentive to encourage participation. We also employed research assistants on the campuses involved to actively recruit (other)<sup>29</sup> students to the

study, a strategy that proved very effective. Five students joined both the survey and interview panels. Survey panel demographics are described in the following section.

The initial survey used a five-point Likert scale to elicit students' responses to a range of statements covering each area of interest. Where appropriate, spaces were also provided for students' further comments. Two further surveys will be initiated in November 2009 and November 2010, and a third survey or short email questionnaire may also be conducted prior to March 2011 to clarify questions raised as a result of earlier research findings. Repeat surveys will examine students' employment and personal trajectories post-graduation in relation to their earlier hopes and expectations.

Interviews explored similar areas to the initial survey: students' reasons for studying business and studying in New Zealand; their living and study experiences to date; and their expectations of or plans for the future. Interviews also explored students' reasons for choosing their particular educational institutions, their expectations of the extent to which they would maintain links with New Zealand and (other) New Zealanders, and information about students' educational backgrounds prior to engaging in tertiary study in New Zealand. Interviews will be repeated a further two times: in December 2009 and December 2010.

In this study we use purposeful sampling to recruit both survey and interview participants;<sup>30</sup> in other words, all Asia-born New Zealand-trained business students are welcome to participate and are invited to do so through business schools, student and peer networks. Although, as discussed in the following section, our phase one participants' birth countries were proportionately similar to those of Asian international students, a sample of this size cannot be representative and no statistics are available on Asia-born (New Zealand and international) business students' birth countries overall. Data in this study is therefore information-rich rather than broadly generalisable, providing insights into the ways in which policies and practices in New Zealand can shape Asia-born business students' experiences in similar and different ways.<sup>31</sup>

27 Polytechnics are government-funded tertiary education institutions in New Zealand that offer certificate-, diploma- and degree-level courses. Courses offered are mainly vocational in focus, or relating to the applied arts and sciences.

28 Chinese was chosen as a second language for publicity purposes because international student statistics suggest that the majority of 'Asian' business students are Chinese. Chinese language material was produced through translation from English to Chinese, careful checking, back-translation to English, and repeat checking.

29 We include the word 'other' here in recognition that some of our participants may identify as New Zealanders.

30 Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park, California: Sage.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 175.

## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

**THE REMAINDER OF THIS REPORT CONSIDERS** the study's preliminary findings based on initial survey and interview data. After a brief outline of participants' demographic information, we focus on four questions that were central to our initial interviews and survey and that are of primary interest in this first phase of the study. These questions include:

- why participants chose to study business;
- why they chose to study in New Zealand;
- how they have experienced studying in New Zealand; and
- what their expectations are for the future (particularly in relation to New Zealand and New Zealanders).

### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

One hundred and thirty-one students completed the initial survey and 40 students or recent graduates were interviewed. These students represented all levels of tertiary study, from certificate to doctoral level, and while most were based in North Island centres, South Island centres were also well represented. Proportionately, students' countries of birth broadly paralleled those evident in available statistics on Asian international students, in that PRC-born students dominated in both panels.<sup>32</sup> Almost two-thirds of survey panel participants (Figure 1) and 43 percent of students interviewed (Figure 2) identified the PRC as their country of birth.

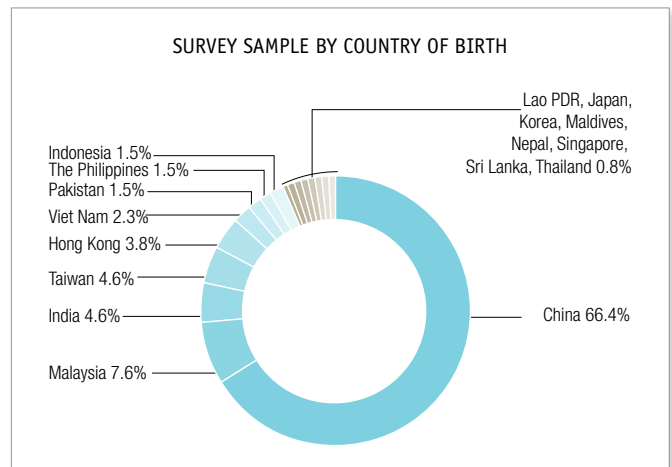


Figure 1

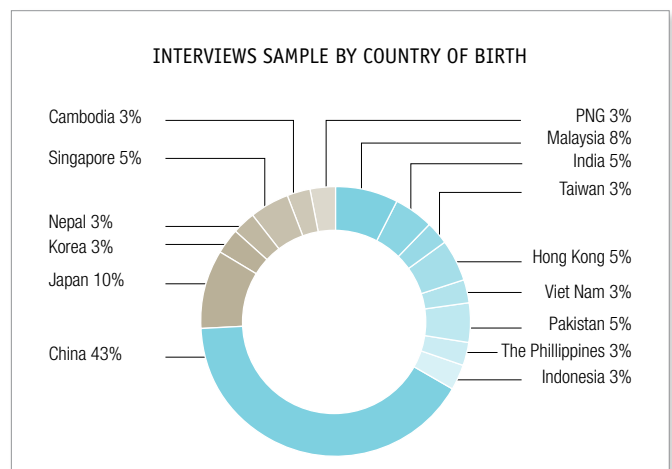


Figure 2

<sup>32</sup> The majority of international students identifying as 'Asian' in New Zealand tertiary education institutions are from the PRC (around 50 percent). We had a slightly higher proportion of PRC-born students in our survey panel and a slightly lower proportion in our interview panel. It is impossible to comment on how representative these panels were in terms of Asia-born business students

generally, since no combined statistics on (New Zealand and international) business students' countries of birth were available.

Seventy-five percent of survey participants were engaged in undergraduate study, 12 percent were engaged in Master-level study, six percent in postgraduate diploma programmes, five percent in doctoral study and two percent were studying for diplomas, but did not specify whether these were at undergraduate or postgraduate level. Slightly more students were male (58 percent) than female (42 percent). Participants ranged in age from 19 to 41 years, but over half were aged between 22 and 26 years. The average age of survey participants was 24 years. Most were single (85 percent). Almost a third of married participants had children.

Ninety percent of survey participants were international students. Of the remaining 10 percent (New Zealand students or former New Zealand students),<sup>33</sup> some had come to New Zealand when their families migrated and some had done so independently. The average length of time they had been living in New Zealand was just over four and a half years. The majority (79 percent) reported a B-grade average or higher in tertiary studies leading to course completion, and 15 percent reported an A-grade average

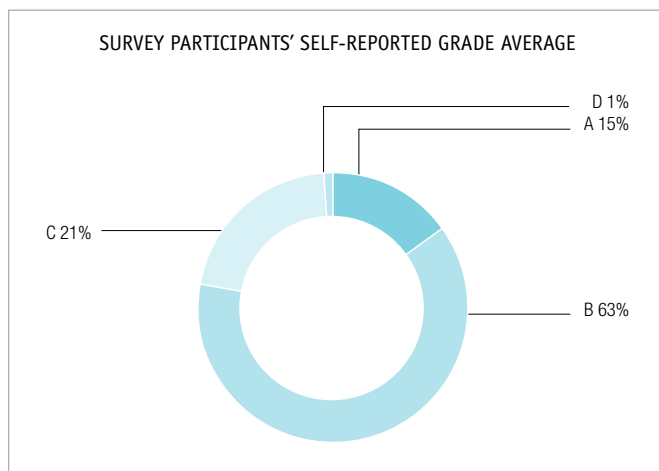


Figure 3

The 40 interview participants represented a range of demographic characteristics similar to those of the survey participants. The lower number of PRC-born students on the interview panel is due to the smaller sample size, and our deliberate efforts to recruit interviewees born in a wide range of countries. Of the 40 students we interviewed, 11 had permanent residence (PR). The majority (25 students) were engaged in undergraduate Bachelor-level study. The remaining 15 were postgraduate students, of whom three were completing doctoral study.

### WHY STUDY BUSINESS?

Marketing and advertising techniques employed by various government agencies all emphasise the power of business in the global landscape. The marketing of business as a degree subject has centred on two main factors: career opportunities, and associated links to travel and international business.<sup>34</sup> New Zealand has a history of strong business connections and trade links with Asian countries. Obtaining a business degree through a New Zealand educational institution has become a popular option for Asian students.

Survey results indicated that existing marketing techniques may effectively promote a positive image of career prospects in business (Figure 4, [page 10](#)). Almost half of the students surveyed indicated that they had heard business was a good degree; and about 60 percent indicated that they believed a business degree would offer them a good job and future career prospects. About 60 percent of survey participants indicated that they had a personal interest in studying business; only 40 percent said that they studied business because of parental influence.

33 These participants had obtained either permanent residency or citizenship status.

34 See [www.newzealandeducated.com](http://www.newzealandeducated.com) for examples of such marketing.

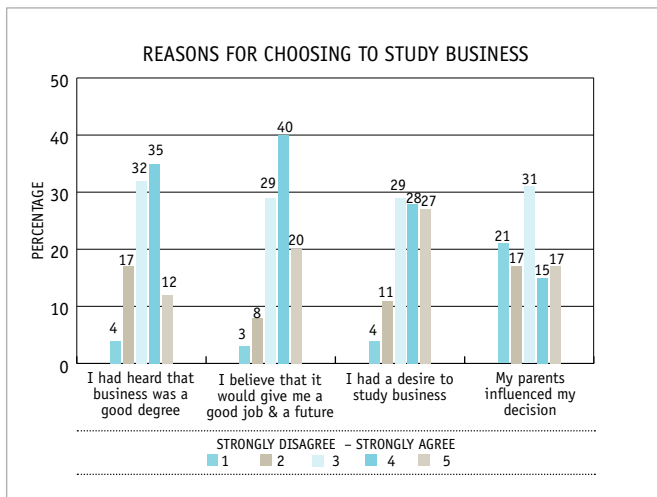


Figure 4

Our interviews with students provided some insight into just what students meant by 'a good job'. Those students who cited a desire for 'a good job' as a reason for studying business emphasised a business graduate's job prospects as international in scope, and offering opportunities for both travel and good financial returns. For example, an Indian international student remarked:

*My goal is to get a demanding job that will keep me busy and reward [me] financially as well as giving me the opportunity to travel and explore my own capabilities.*

However, other kinds of motivation also emerged. These motivations included a view of business as an area of study that matched students' previous experiences and/or qualifications, met parents' aspirations and expectations, was recommended by friends or contacts, could enhance 'exchange' between people, was 'practical' in focus, fostered an international perspective, and was an 'easier' option than other subject areas (for example, science).

For many of the students we interviewed, the decision to study business was a personal one, influenced by parents in some cases, but also a result of (sometimes longstanding) personal interests and aspirations. Only six of the 40 interviewees identified parents as a key influence in their decisions to study business, although

slightly more students (nine) attributed their decisions to study in New Zealand either partially or wholly to parental influence. This finding corresponds to and amplifies the findings of an earlier study, in which parental influence was found to be the primary influence on their children's decisions to study abroad.<sup>35</sup> Our study suggests that although parents may significantly influence their children's decisions to study abroad, they may have much less influence over what subjects their children decide to study.

Fourteen of the students interviewed indicated that the decision to study business related to their earlier studies at secondary or tertiary level, in New Zealand or elsewhere. Some students highlighted the role of 'inspirational' secondary school teachers in promoting business as an academic subject and career choice. While only three students indicated that the decision to study business was a case of "following in my parents' [business] footsteps", 11 identified friends or family as encouraging them to study business.<sup>33</sup> Our interview data suggest that the proactive promotion of business subjects at secondary level may assist with attracting students to business-related tertiary study.

### WHY STUDY IN NEW ZEALAND?

Students identified several key reasons for choosing to study in New Zealand, but these differed in importance between survey and interview participants. Four primary motivations were highlighted by the survey participants (Figure 5, page 11):

- the opportunity New Zealand offered to study in English. Seventy-three percent of participants indicated a strong preference to study in an English-speaking environment;
- New Zealand's perceived affordability;
- New Zealand offering an opportunity to study away from home; and
- having heard or seen positive images of New Zealand.

New Zealand's close geographical proximity to Asia was apparently much less important in influencing survey participants' decisions to study here.

<sup>35</sup> Ho et al. (2007) found that students from the PRC identified their parents as the primary influence behind their decisions to study abroad.

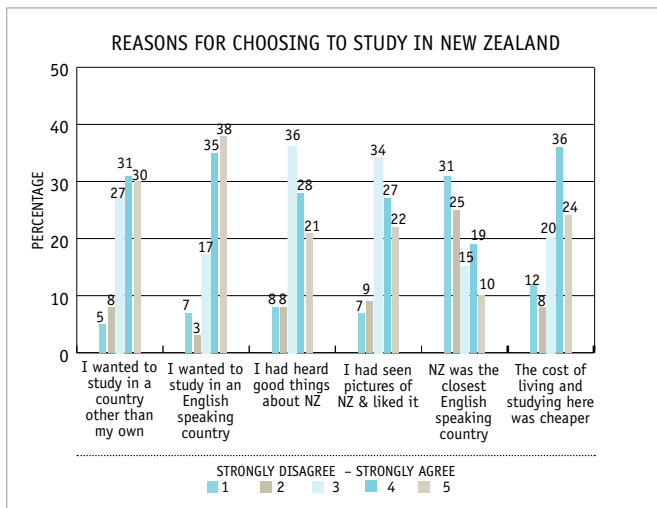


Figure 5

Eighty percent of students we surveyed found it relatively easy to apply for visas, and commented favourably on the process for renewing visas via the university/Immigration New Zealand online system.

The 40 students we interviewed ordered their reasons for studying in New Zealand differently from the larger number of survey participants (131). Just over half (23) of the interviewees highlighted New Zealand's affordability as a motivation for studying here, and described New Zealand as a 'cheaper' option than the United States (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), Canada and Australia. Seven students who alluded to New Zealand's affordability as a study destination had PR status, and indicated that staying in New Zealand made economic sense since they could enrol as domestic students. For four of the students we interviewed, New Zealand was an affordable study destination because they had received scholarships to study here.

The opportunity New Zealand offered for an English-speaking education was of secondary importance to interviewees. The disparity between interview and survey panel results in this regard may reflect the fact that fewer interview than survey panel participants were PRC-born.

One Indonesian international student interviewed commented positively on the dominance of the English language in New Zealand society, stating:

*Australia already has too many Indonesians, so I can't improve my English [there]. New Zealand has less Indonesians, so [studying here] can help to improve my English.*

In contrast, other students we interviewed remarked favourably on New Zealanders' diversity. For example, one student stated that she had come to New Zealand because her chosen university had a "Japan[ese] orientation". Another student we interviewed stated that she came to New Zealand and hoped to learn to "communicate with people from other countries and cultures" (not necessarily solely with native English-speakers).

Nine interviewees described how a perception of New Zealand's environment as "beautiful" or "natural" had drawn them to study here, and 10 a perception of New Zealand as "less distracting", "safer" or having less discrimination than Australia, Canada, the USA or the UK. Some students recalled specific television or other advertising that shaped their impressions of New Zealand's natural environment.

For some students who we interviewed, 'safety' in New Zealand was associated with the presence of family members, contacts or friends who could watch out for them while they were here. For example, an international student from the PRC explained:

*My mother chose New Zealand. My father wanted me to go to the UK. My mother changed the direction because of a relative here who is a lawyer, someone to care for me. Safety is an issue for my Mum.*

Eight of the students we interviewed stated that a reason for choosing to study in New Zealand was that they knew someone who lived in New Zealand or who had lived, visited or studied here previously. Such contacts included family friends, previous teachers and relatives. Two international students described 'prior contact' in terms of visits from high-profile New Zealanders to their home towns in the PRC and Japan respectively.

The student from the PRC recalled a visit to her city from the Mayor of Wellington, and the Japanese student recalled a visit from a group of delegates representing a New Zealand educational institution. An additional student chose to study here having previously visited New Zealand while at secondary school. The significance to some participants of prior contact with New Zealand suggests that sojourners' or newcomers' positive experiences in New Zealand are crucial as a form of 'marketing'. This is discussed further in the final section of the report.

Nine students also cited parental influence as causing them to come to New Zealand, as either a migrant or an international student. A combination of factors apparently shaped parental choices, including the close proximity or prior experiences of existing family members or contacts, perceptions of New Zealand as a safe place to study, and its perceived affordability. The needs of another family member were also a consideration for an international student from Nepal. He stated that New Zealand was an attractive option because it offered new opportunities for his wife. In contrast, four international students (from India, Japan and the PRC) indicated that they had come to New Zealand specifically to learn independence, escape parental influence and/or in contrast to their parents' desire that they study elsewhere.

Some interviewees noted other reasons for studying in New Zealand. These included that: New Zealand qualifications are internationally recognised; New Zealand educational institutions compare favourably with those in Australia, the USA, the UK and the Netherlands; New Zealand has a low profile in international controversies; IELTS (International English Language Testing System) is not a prerequisite for gaining a student visa (but is part of an offer-of-place prerequisites for entry to many tertiary-level courses); and there is no age restriction on undergraduate entry. Three international students interviewed indicated that New Zealand was not their first choice of destination. One would have preferred to study in the USA, one in Australia and one had been unable to gain entry to a university in her home country (the PRC).

**EXPERIENCES IN NEW ZEALAND**

On average, students who we surveyed and interviewed had been living in New Zealand for just over four and half years; long enough to have made significant settlement adjustments. When we asked students to identify good and bad things about living in New Zealand, two distinct sets of experience emerged. Around three-quarters of students noted positive experiences of living and studying in New Zealand and positive relationships with (other) New Zealanders. In contrast, about a quarter of students indicated that they felt lonely, missed 'home' (elsewhere) and/or experienced difficulty relating to other New Zealanders.

**POSITIVE EXPERIENCES**

Seventy-one percent of students we surveyed indicated that they had enjoyed studying in New Zealand, and just over half said that their studies had matched their expectations (Figure 6).

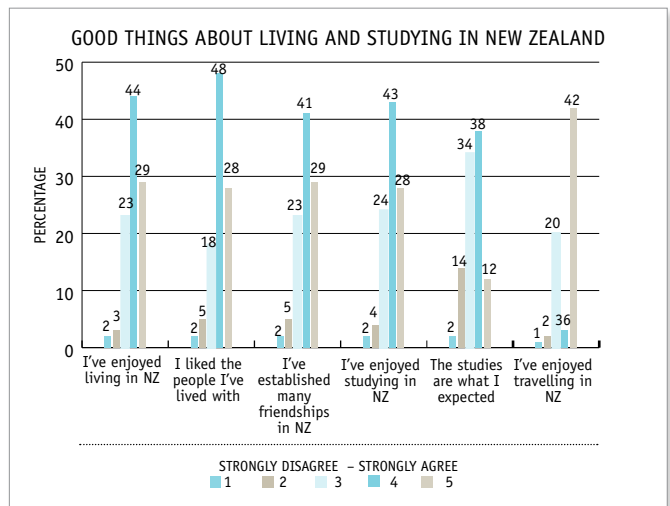


Figure 6

In addition, over half of the survey participants indicated a considerable degree of confidence in studying and living in an English-speaking environment, coping with academic demands and applying for visas (Figure 7). While a third of participants returned a neutral response to the survey statement “the studies are what I expected”, only 15 percent suggested that their studies had not matched expectations. These statistics are suggestive of better-than-adequate performance on the part of business schools.

Interview data shed some light on the ways in which students’ study experiences met (or exceeded) their expectations. In a positive sense, almost a quarter of survey participants commented on their teaching and learning environments as enriching and collegial. Students expressed appreciation for the quality of the teaching they had received, in particular the use of interactive teaching approaches and the use of assignments rather than exams as an assessment tool. Students also commented favourably on: the diversity of student populations in New Zealand; positive student-staff relationships; high-quality, accessible facilities; student services such as ‘Student Job Search’; exposure through their courses to different companies and work experiences; opportunities their courses provided for academic specialisation; and the marketability of their qualifications in New Zealand and overseas.

**NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES**

Survey participants indicated that they viewed tuition costs as the most negative aspect of studying in New Zealand, with almost 60 percent expressing disquiet at the cost of their academic tuition (Figure 7). This is an interesting finding given that they also identified New Zealand’s perceived affordability as a key motivation for choosing to study here.

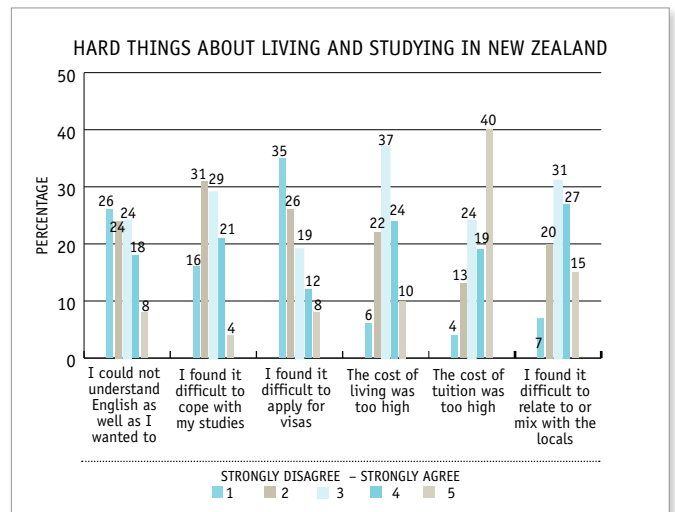


Figure 7

The apparent mismatch in students’ responses in relation to perceived and actual tuition costs is not surprising given the direct nature of the survey statement and the likelihood that all students would prefer not to pay for their studies. However, it is also possible that it reflects the period during which this cohort of students studied, since it coincided with rising exchange rates and increased international and domestic student fees in many educational institutions. Our research revealed that high tuition costs can be a significant distraction and source of stress. For example, an international student from the PRC articulated the difficult situation she faced when confronted with both high tuition costs and the challenge of adjusting to a new study environment:

*The hardest [thing] is the financial struggle. During my first year I worked but my body couldn’t cope... And also as an international student I have paid a big fee and I couldn’t afford to work instead of studying.*

Another international student, also from the PRC, suggested that educational institutions in New Zealand should practise good business principles by ensuring that the welcome students receive is commensurate with the cost of their studies. He said:

*My view is that selling education to Chinese students has a one-time-use customer focus, just to get money. But if we think delivery for a longer term and repeat business, we will provide greater satisfaction and ensure [students'] recommendation for the future. We should welcome Chinese students and make them feel a part of New Zealand society as this will help the education industry in the longer term... We need to let them join the wider society.*

Of secondary concern to students we surveyed was difficulty mixing with 'locals' (Figure 7, page 13). Forty-two percent of these students indicated that they found it difficult mixing with or relating to local people in New Zealand. Interviews revealed more clearly who many students perceived as 'locals' (or 'Kiwis'). Fourteen interviewees described having experienced, observed or encountered "white" or "non-Asian" New Zealanders' discriminatory or unfriendly attitudes or behaviour towards people of Asian descent, "foreigners" and/or "migrants" in New Zealand. Four interviewees spoke about such behaviour as low-level or covert discrimination, for example a sense of not being included in workplace environments or being refused employment and, in one case, volunteer work, without an adequate explanation. Some interviewees also noted overt acts of violence or abuse that seemed to be racially motivated, for example verbal harassment and "egging". Some interviewees noted that such behaviour would be unthinkable in their 'home' countries. For example, an international student from the PRC commented:

*I don't feel integrated as part of society here. The Chinese people in China are very friendly towards foreigners but here there is discrimination. People tend to click to their own race.*

However, some interviewees offered alternative explanations for some New Zealanders' apparently unfriendly behaviour towards Asian people. For example, the student quoted above suggested that an apparent lack of friendliness might sometimes indicate shyness rather than intentional unfriendliness, remarking, "Kiwis are generally very shy".

Twenty percent of the students we surveyed had already obtained jobs, mostly prior to completion of their courses. When asked how many jobs they had applied for, answers ranged from one to an improbable 600, although three-quarters indicated that they had made about five job applications. Students we surveyed were asked to speculate why some applications had been unsuccessful. Key reasons given by students were: inexperience as a new or near graduate; the large number of graduates compared with the number of available positions in business; and the students' status as "international graduates" (Figure 8).

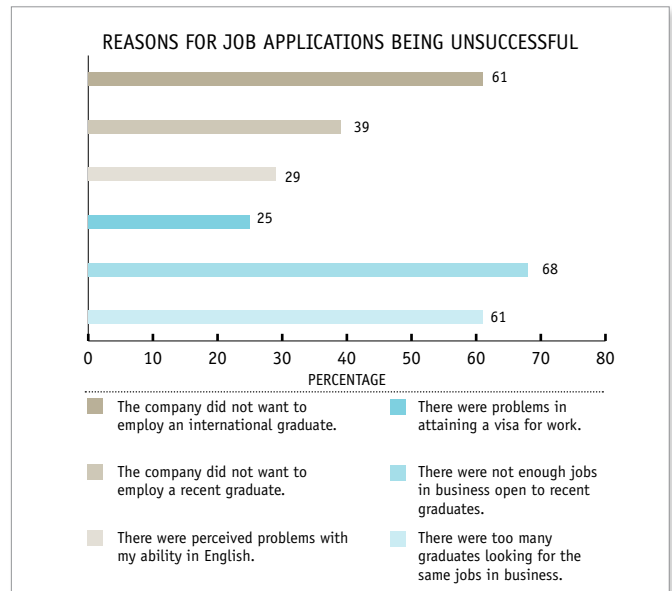


Figure 8



Interviewees emphasised the value of gaining New Zealand work experience. One student noted that “New Zealand companies are wary about hiring people without” this.

Some interviewees gave examples of discriminatory treatment in workplace environments. For example, a new graduate (PR) from the PRC described having received “rude comments” from “locals” in her workplace that questioned her legitimacy as an Asian person employed in New Zealand. She described being asked, “Why are you here?” and hearing remarks about Asians being from “third world countries and taking whatever jobs are thrown at them for minimum pay”. Other students stated that such comments can be seen as “natural”. For example, a Singaporean PR observed that “being Asian does have some disadvantages as employers in New Zealand are naturally biased to pick their own first”. One international student from the PRC insisted that barriers are not necessarily due to discrimination, but also disparate linguistic and cultural backgrounds. He argued that: “Kiwis face the same problem in China”:

*International graduates or immigrants do not understand the local culture, history background and speak as well as locals. It is no doubt that the local businesses prefer to hire someone who knows how to play the game.*

Students we interviewed described some factors that may help to overcome barriers, discrimination or distance between themselves and (other) New Zealanders. For example, small class sizes and positive classroom environments featured as promoting constructive interaction and the development of friendships. Some interviewees spoke about volunteering, part-time employment and involvement in community organisations and student associations as allowing them to feel more “integrated” and to become more familiar with “how to play the game” in New Zealand. One student identified a senior colleague who had made him feel welcomed in his workplace, observing her skilfulness and willingness to “relate across people”. He noted that as a person in a senior position, she had power to influence other employees, commenting, “the Kiwis who came after her have to adjust to her”. Some interviewees noted that “being accepted like the locals [as] an insider” takes time and the development of trust.

Despite some students’ negative experiences in New Zealand and with (other) New Zealanders, more survey participants indicated that their liking for New Zealanders had grown (37 percent) rather than diminished (14 percent) through studying here (Figure 9), as had their liking for business as a career pathway (Figure 10).

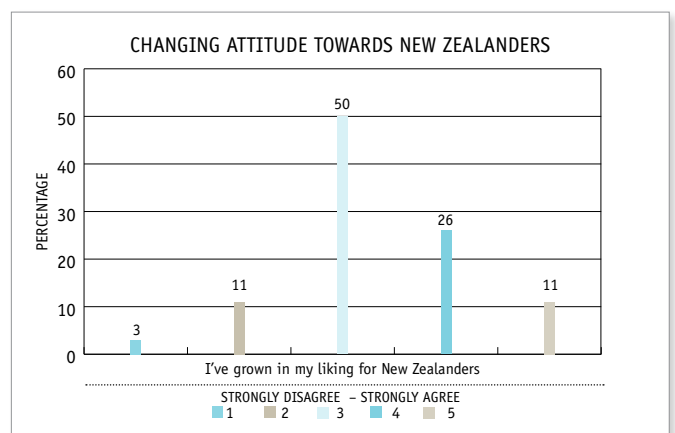


Figure 9

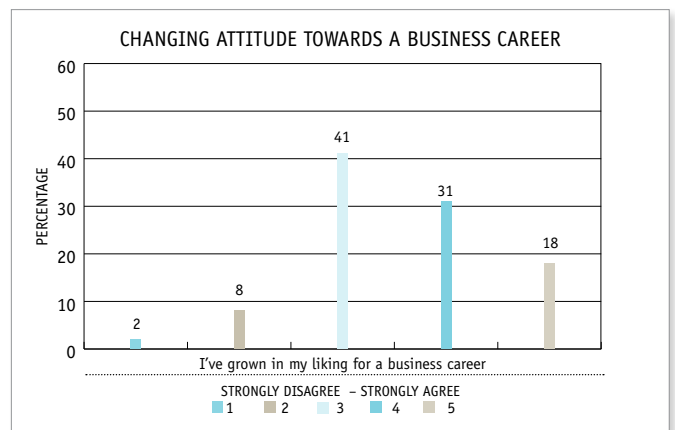


Figure 10

Also, the majority of the students we surveyed indicated that they were neither very lonely nor very homesick while studying in New Zealand (Figure 11).

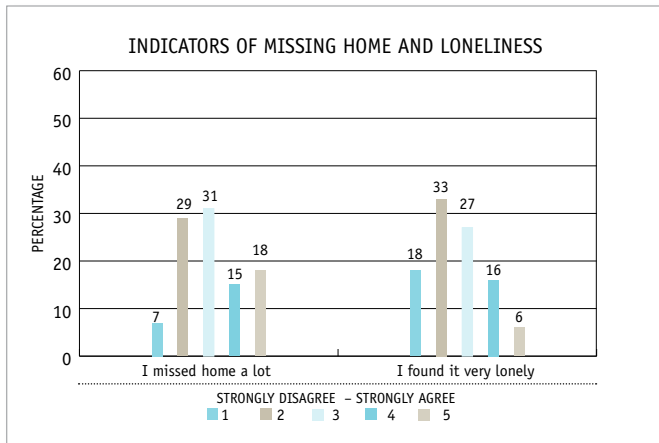


Figure 11

This finding related to loneliness is in keeping with similar findings in surveys of the wider international student body.<sup>36</sup> Students’ sense of inclusion and belonging, and changing perceptions of New Zealanders, will be examined further in subsequent surveys and interviews.

**EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

**POST-GRADUATION LOCATION**

Forty-five percent of the students we surveyed indicated that they wanted to live and work in New Zealand (10 percent already had PR), and just over a third said that they wanted to work in their countries of birth. Forty-three percent indicated that they were expected to work in their birth countries after graduating from their studies (Figure 12). The survey did not ask whose expectations were involved in shaping students’ post-graduation pathways.

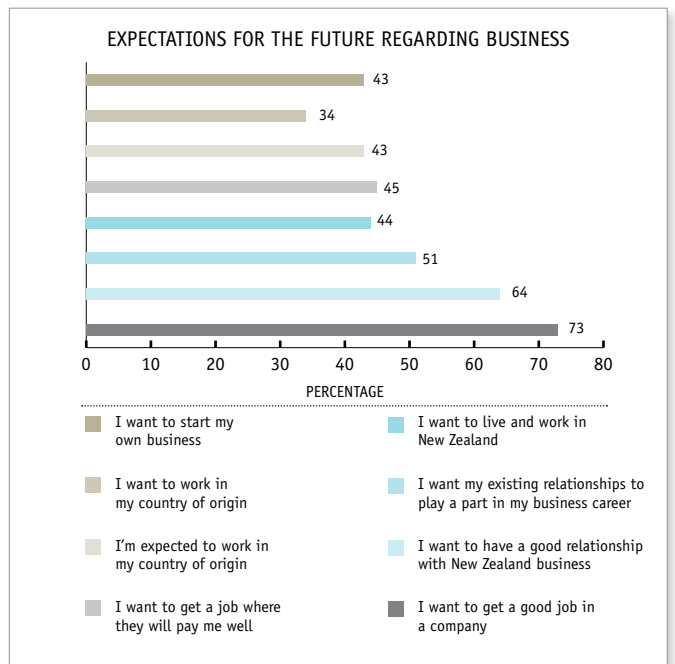


Figure 12

36 Deloitte (2008).

Fifty-seven percent of students we surveyed either already had PR or intended to apply for PR in New Zealand (Figure 13). A further 31 percent indicated that they were considering applying for PR at some point.

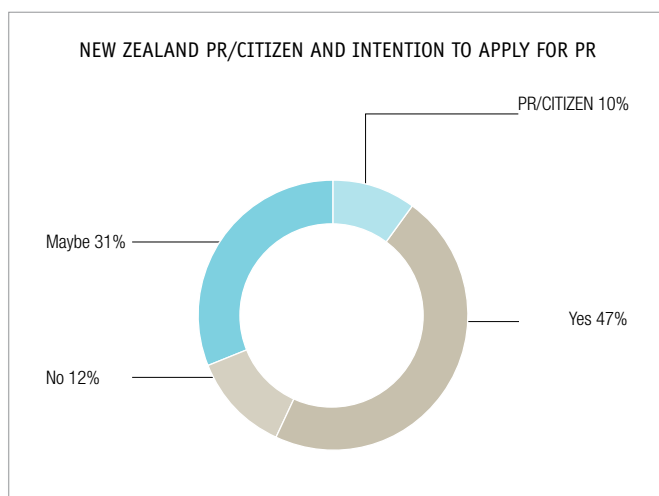


Figure 13

Of the students interviewed, seven wanted to live in New Zealand on a short-term basis only. A higher proportion of interviewees (15) indicated that they hoped to live or work in their home countries post-graduation (for four students, this would be after working for a time in New Zealand or elsewhere). Seven students indicated that they wanted to live and work elsewhere (neither in New Zealand nor in their birth country). Possible destinations included the USA, Singapore, Australia and PRC.

Students we interviewed clearly associated family expectations with a sense of obligation and sometimes conflict in this regard. For example, an international student from the PRC remarked, "I decided to stay here for work to gain some local experience before returning to China one day for my parents". Another PRC-born student was unable to return to the PRC after marrying a "Kiwi" and gaining PR.

She described a sense of being torn between dual family commitments: the need to support her ageing parents back home, and remain with/fulfil the expectations of her husband and young daughter in New Zealand. In contrast, an international student from south India expressed gladness that his studies in New Zealand had provided some distance from direct parental influence.

### POST-GRADUATION ASPIRATIONS

Among the students we surveyed, the most important considerations post-graduation were getting a "good" and "well paid" job (Figure 12, page 16). Seventy-three percent indicated that they hoped to get a good job in a good company, and 64 percent said that they wanted a job that paid them well. Interview participants described a range of work and/or study aspirations. Five students hoped to complete postgraduate study in business, two to gain academic positions, two to conduct research, and two to teach business at a secondary school level. The remaining students hoped to work in various industries and professions, including taxation law, multinational companies, auditing, accounting, import and export, trade and tourism, the financial sector, international labour, human resources, consultancy, computing or software engineering, marketing, agriculture and the not-for-profit sector, or to start their own businesses. Of students we interviewed, career motivations ranged widely, from the desire for a fast-paced life and well paid corporate job to more humanitarian aspirations:

*After completing my studies, I have a better opportunity to work and serve my country. I have more ideas and vision as a result of coming and I have a greater capacity for making a positive contribution back home or elsewhere.*

Over 70 percent of survey participants indicated that being Asian might make it difficult to obtain work in New Zealand, and 55 percent said that transitioning into employment post-graduation might be difficult as a new graduate (Figure 14).

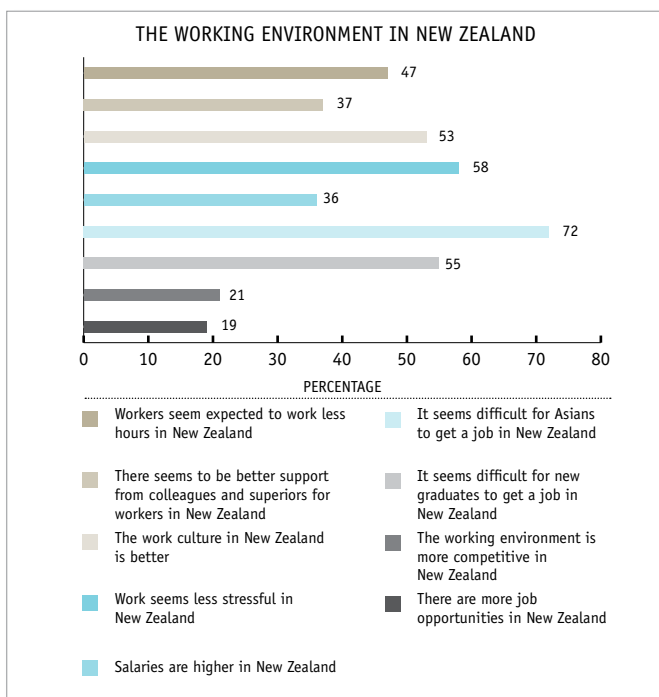


Figure 14

Students we surveyed viewed New Zealand as offering limited opportunities for future employment, but also revealed positive perceptions of the New Zealand working environment. Over half agreed that the work culture in New Zealand is better than elsewhere; almost 60 percent said that work seems less stressful; and almost half said that workers seem expected to work fewer hours in New Zealand (Figure 14).

Of the students we interviewed, 14 suggested that being Asian or “foreign” in the New Zealand business environment might be a disadvantage in terms of their future employment, and five students said that the current economic downturn would negatively affect their job prospects. The current shortage of employment opportunities in New Zealand is perhaps reflected in some interviewees’ intentions to engage in further study. For example, one student said, “I am thinking of doing another year at [university] to get honours given the bleak economic situation at the moment”.

Some students saw PR status as a necessary pre-condition to further study in New Zealand: “If I apply for PR successfully, then I can do further study extramurally or even full time [since the] fees will be better”.

**CONNECTIONS WITH NEW ZEALAND**

Maintaining links developed while in New Zealand was a clear priority for the students we surveyed (Figure 15).

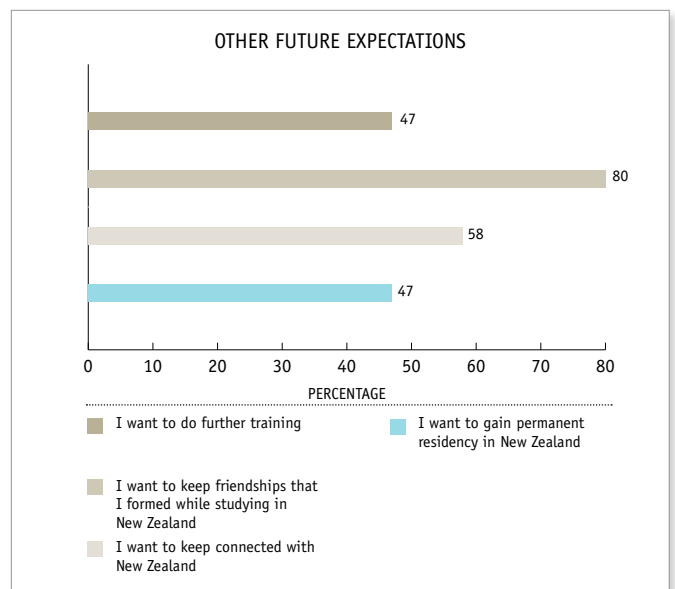


Figure 15

We asked students if they anticipated maintaining contact with people in New Zealand. Ninety-five percent of those surveyed indicated they would maintain contact. When asked how, the universal response was “via the internet”. Forty-four percent of survey participants indicated that existing New Zealand connections would likely play a role in their future business careers.

Students we interviewed also described the New Zealand contacts they would likely maintain. These included other international students and recent migrants, business lecturers or academic mentors, workmates from part-time jobs, and previous employers. Some interviewees explicitly discussed entering business using contacts in New Zealand: “My friends in China have asked me to identify any business that they can set up between New Zealand and China”. Some interviewees also identified their distinct advantage in business as people with transnational study and living experiences and an appreciation of multiple worldviews. For example:

*Since I now have knowledge of New Zealand and China I would like to have my own international business between New Zealand and China; maybe in imports (shoes, clothes and whatever there’s a market for) and exports (milk powder, wool etc). I have a friend who owns a fabric factory in China and I hope to return there one day but for now I want to gain some local experience before returning. I will give myself three to five more years and then act on my plan.*

The extent to which students’ international and cross-cultural experiences and skills shape their future career pathways will be examined through repeat interviews and surveys, as will the role of existing relationships in maintaining ongoing connections with New Zealand and in business situations.<sup>37</sup>

---

37 For a philosophical discussion of the ‘necessary skilfulness’ inherent in being a ‘world’ traveller, or someone who can shift between and across social, cultural and behavioural worlds, see: Lugones, M. (1987). Playfulness, ‘world’-travelling, and loving perception. *Hypatia*, 2(2), 3-19.

## DISCUSSION

This is a longitudinal study that tracks Asia-born business students from their final year of study through the two years immediately following graduation. Its findings are likely to be of interest to policy-makers, export education marketing bodies, tertiary education institutions and New Zealand business schools. Although the study's findings to date are preliminary, they nevertheless shed some light on the following four questions: why Asia-born business students choose to study business; what factors attract them to study business in New Zealand; how they reflect on their experiences in New Zealand; and what are their hopes and expectations for the future.

### WHY STUDY BUSINESS?

This report highlights several factors motivating Asia-born students to study business subjects. These can be loosely grouped as personal, familial and educational factors.

Personal factors include career aspirations, for example the desire for a good job, an international career and wealth acquisition. Personal factors also include an interest in business as a subject area and as complementary to other academic areas.

Familial factors include parental business involvement, parents' desires and encouragement from family and close friends to pursue business as a career.

Educational factors include experiences in secondary and earlier tertiary education that spark an ongoing interest in business, including the input of inspirational teachers. Although the desirability of an education in English, and corporate aspirations featured highly in our participants' responses,<sup>38</sup> our preliminary findings suggest that the factors motivating Asian-born students to study business are complex rather than simple, including personal and familial aspirations, academic interest, humanitarian concerns and personal curiosity.

Our research suggests that it may be strategic for educational institutions and marketing bodies to think at three levels when seeking to attract Asia-born students to business:

- they could endeavour to connect with and promote students' personal aspirations and interest in business as a subject area;
- they could also target a parent audience, communicating clearly the wide range of positive opportunities that business study offers young people; and
- they could seek to support and connect with students' earlier educational experiences, for example by developing links with staff who teach business subjects in secondary schools, and communicating to prospective students how a business education in New Zealand might complement business studies completed elsewhere.

### WHY STUDY IN NEW ZEALAND?

Preliminary project findings suggest that Asia-born business students are motivated to study in New Zealand for several reasons. These include: New Zealand's English-language-based business courses; its perceived affordability; its unique natural and human environment; and its 'difference' as a study destination away from home. However, it is notable that students in our research also indicated widely varied reasons for studying in New Zealand.

Our findings highlight the diversity of Asia-born business students and the danger of generalising too broadly about particular groups of students in higher education.<sup>39</sup> For example, while New Zealand's English-language dominance was attractive to some students, to others New Zealanders' diversity was also attractive, as was the opportunity to study in educational institutions that had some connection with home. For some students, studying in New Zealand was affordable since they could enrol as 'domestic' students and study without leaving 'home'. For others, New Zealand was seen as affordable owing to favourable exchange rates and relatively 'cheap' course fees and living costs.

38 Rizvi (2004).

39 Mayuzumi, K., Motobayashi, K., Nagayama, C., & Takeuchi, M. (2007). Transforming diversity in Canadian higher education: A dialogue of Japanese women graduate students. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 12(5-6), 581-592. Rhee, J. (2006). Remembering (to) shifting alignments: Korean women's transnational narratives in US higher education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 19(5), 595-615. Rhee, J., & Subreenduth, S. (2006). De/colonising education: Examining transnational localities. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 19(5), 545-548.

While students revealed a widely held perception of New Zealand as safe and beautiful, 'safety' was referred to in relation to not only civil society but also to the presence of family members and friends. While current international education marketing associates New Zealand's beautiful and 'pure' natural environment with adventure opportunities,<sup>40</sup> some students revealed that their parents associated the country's environment with quietness, or a lack of distraction for those engaged in academic study. New Zealand's 'difference' offered some students an opportunity to follow the trend to study overseas, but for some it also offered an opportunity to escape parental influence and follow new life pathways.

Implications are as follows. First is the apparent importance of maintaining New Zealand's affordability as a study destination, and perceptions of its affordability, especially in comparison with major competitors such as the UK, the USA, Canada and Australia. Second is the importance of links in promoting New Zealand as a study destination: with family in New Zealand; with family, friends or teachers who have been to New Zealand; and/or through visits by New Zealanders to students' home cities in Asian countries. Our research shows that the significance of contacts in attracting Asia-born business students to New Zealand should not be underestimated. Our findings also indicate that expenditure on the projection of an attractive brand or image is likely to be wasted if those attracted to come have negative experiences. Indeed, inaccurate assurances may do more harm than good in terms of attracting future students, since clearly some seek advice from others who have been here before them.

## EXPERIENCES IN NEW ZEALAND

Most students indicated that their experiences in New Zealand had been positive and most wanted to remain in New Zealand after graduation, at least for a while. Students revealed a good level of confidence in engaging in academic study in an English-speaking environment, and confidence in negotiating New Zealand visa regulations and requirements. Notably, their relative confidence and positive reflections on living and studying in New Zealand may reflect the kinds of student likely to volunteer for a study such as this. However, students' reflections offer useful insights into the kinds of factor that may facilitate (or preclude) Asia-born business students' positive experiences in New Zealand. For example, participants associated positive study experiences with collegial and diverse campus environments, warm staff-student relationships and connections with other students. Conversely, they associated negative study experiences with difficult academic tasks, difficult staff-student relationships and a perceived lack of applicability in some subject areas.

Many students expressed concerns about employment pathways in New Zealand, given the importance of trust and acceptance to gaining employment. Some students identified experiences that helped them to learn to "play the game" here, for example volunteer and community sector roles, and work experience opportunities that opened doors to employment. Students who spoke warmly about their interactions with 'Kiwis' emphasised that developing trust takes time and opportunities to prove one's trustworthiness. Business schools could promote such opportunities through including work experience or company partnership arrangements in their programmes where appropriate. Also, given their expertise in human resource management and team-building, business schools are strategically placed sites in which to address issues relating to culture, prejudice and workplace environments with New Zealand's future business leaders. Subsequent surveys and interviews will further examine matters relating to discrimination, employment and workplace relations, and factors likely to facilitate positive interaction, trust and acceptance in classrooms, workplaces and community contexts.

<sup>40</sup> See <http://www.newzealandeducated.com/>

## FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

Students' aspirations and expectations were marked by confidence and uncertainty, independence and obligations. About half of the students in our research wanted to obtain PR in New Zealand (if not PR's already), but many had long-term plans, for example to live and work in New Zealand for a while before moving elsewhere or returning home to fulfil familial obligations. Our research indicates that Asia-born business students should not be taken for granted as a source of skilled labour in New Zealand. Many in our study alluded to multiple living and employment options, suggesting that if career pathways did not unfold easily in New Zealand, possibilities would likely open up elsewhere. In particular, uncertainties were expressed about employment pathways in New Zealand. Many interviewees alluded to the current economic downturn as creating uncertainties in business at large, while many also highlighted inexperience and being Asian as possibly making employment difficult to obtain in the New Zealand business sector.

Students suggested that human relationships would likely both facilitate and constrain future career pathways. For example, the pull to fulfil familial obligations clearly shaped many participants' expectations of eventually returning home, a finding that is likely to encourage Asian governments concerned with future skilled labour shortages.<sup>41</sup> Given the importance to New Zealand of its business links with Asia, it is encouraging that most students in our study anticipated maintaining connections with contacts in New Zealand. Such contacts included friends, lecturers, former employers and workmates. Some interviewees spoke directly about how their contacts might shape future business activities, for example by facilitating the development of import/export companies or joint New Zealand-Asia business ventures. The ways in which participants' post-graduation career and life pathways are shaped by connections with New Zealand and New Zealanders is our primary interest in the remainder of the study.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The central question that this study addresses concerns the role that Asia-born New Zealand-trained business graduates play in the development of New Zealand-Asia business relationships. Although not answered by this initial report, there are promising indications that Asia-born business graduates could play a future role in developing and facilitating New Zealand-Asia business relationships. This is through:

- continuing connections with New Zealand and New Zealanders;
- working and living in New Zealand (for a period of time);
- bringing their knowledge of Asian and New Zealand business contexts to bear on future business developments; and
- developing New Zealand-Asia related business ventures.

The remainder of the study will look at each of these indicative categories in depth in relation to graduates' work and living experiences as they unfold.

<sup>41</sup> For a fuller discussion, see: Iredale, R., and Gao, F. (2001). *The Transforming Role of Skilled and Business Returnees: Taiwan, China and Bangladesh*. Centre for Asia Pacific Social Transformation Studies, University of Wollongong, NSW, Australia.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the data in this study is preliminary, we suggest the following recommendations for stakeholders in education, policy development, and business.

### **EDUCATION**

Recognise prospective students as situated within broader family networks. In marketing approaches, try to connect with prospective students' families as well as students themselves.

Value and build links with prospective and past students by:

- developing connections with students at secondary school level;
- ensuring that current students' experiences are as meaningful and fulfilling as possible; and
- maintaining contact with alumni where possible.

Don't take Asia-born international students for granted. Many of these students have transnational study options, and are likely to go elsewhere if New Zealand is experienced by their contacts as an undesirable, unsafe, and unaffordable study destination.

Consider how to support students' transition from study to work: for example, by actively facilitating work experience opportunities and/or company partnerships.

Promote the ongoing education of the New Zealand business community in relation to the strategic value of employing Asia-born, New Zealand-trained business graduates in order to explore and build links with Asia.

### **POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

Continue to promote straightforward work visa application processes for new international student graduates while recognizing that for some of these graduates, finding full-time work may be difficult or a gradual process. If the New Zealand business community is to benefit from Asia-born business graduates' skills and connections long-term, graduate work visas may need to be flexible: for example, allowing graduates to gain volunteer or part-time work experience if necessary, or New Zealand work experience in an area that is tangential to their area of study.

### **BUSINESS**

Recognise the unique skills, understandings, and connections that Asia-born New Zealand-trained business graduates can bring to an organisation, particularly if interested in developing or exploring links with Asian people or countries in the Asia region.

Promote supportive work environments that promote newcomers' ability to contribute and in which they find 'strategic allies' able to provide explanations, guidance and information when necessary.

## APPENDIX:

### BUSINESS SCHOOLS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT (PHASE ONE)

#### *BUSINESS SCHOOLS AND DEPARTMENTS FROM WHICH PARTICIPANTS WERE RECRUITED*

#### UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

##### *COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS:*

- Accounting and Information Systems
- Economics and Finance Management
- Master of Business Administration (MBA)
- Master of Business Management (MBM)
- National Centre for Research on Europe

#### LINCOLN UNIVERSITY

##### *FACULTY OF COMMERCE:*

- Accounting, Economics, Finance
- Agricultural Management, Property Studies
- Business Management, Law and Marketing

#### MASSEY UNIVERSITY

##### *COLLEGE OF BUSINESS:*

- School of Accountancy
- School of Aviation
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Communication, Journalism and Marketing
- Department of Economics and Finance
- Department of Management
- Department of Management and International Business

#### UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

##### *SCHOOL OF BUSINESS:*

- Accountancy and Business Law
- Economics
- Executive Education
- Executive Programmes: Business Administration (the Otago MBA, dBA) and Entrepreneurship
- Finance and Quantitative Analysis
- Information Science (Health Informatics)
- International Business
- Management
- Marketing
- Tourism

#### VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

##### *FACULTY OF COMMERCE AND ADMINISTRATION:*

- Accounting and Commercial Law
- Marketing and International Business
- Economics and Finance
- Information Management

#### AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY (AUT)

##### *THE BUSINESS SCHOOL*

#### UNITEC

##### *BUSINESS STUDIES*

#### WELTEC

##### *SCHOOL OF BUSINESS*

TRACKING STUDY SERIES OF ASIAN BUSINESS GRADUATES • ISBN 978-0-95882964-6-5 (ONLINE PDF)

# ASIA: NZ RESEARCH

ASIA NEW ZEALAND FOUNDATION  
Level 7, 36 Customhouse Quay  
PO Box 10 144  
Wellington, 6143 New Zealand

Telephone: 64 4 471 2320

Facsimile: 64 4 471 2330

Email: [asianz@asianz.org.nz](mailto:asianz@asianz.org.nz)

**asia:nz**online [www.asianz.org.nz](http://www.asianz.org.nz)



**asia:nz**  
FOUNDATION