Imagined mobility: migration and transnationalism among Indian students in Australia

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Students Going Overseas Then & Now

So far I have approached the topic of Indian overseas students in Australia from a migration perspective. From the start it was clear that the majority of Indian students come to Australia with a so-called ‘double intent’: they are there for the purpose of both education and migration. However, this situation is not reflected in the visa with which they enter Australia; on paper they are simply ‘overseas students’. This is also how they are talked about in the press, and how they appear in statistics. This chapter will focus on this dilemma. While in the previous chapter these students were placed in a historic framework of Indian migrants arriving in Australia, in this chapter the focus will simply be on the history of ‘studying abroad’, and more in particular, on the history of overseas students in Australia. Rather than fieldwork data, a reading of academic books and papers published on the topic of international education of the past hundred years forms the basis of this chapter. Special attention will be paid to the issue of non-returning students; students who have come to a particular country to study but then decide to stay on, or who simply never return to where they come from. The relevancy of doing so is simple: although studying abroad is often understood as a consequence of increasing globalisation, it remains a rather narrowly defined concept by itself, leaving little room for understanding the people who fall under this category as anything but ‘overseas students’. Overseas students, and in particular those of Asian origin in Australia, are most definitely more than that. When analysing the historic accounts and studies of students abroad, we find that they were often associated with issues seemingly unrelated to the formal intent of ‘studying abroad’. What I am specifically talking about here is ‘the issue of non-return’. The fact that this issue often arises in literature on overseas students - and also, for instance, in literature regarding the braindrain of the 1960s and 70s - should have indicated that understanding of studying-abroad was perhaps a little naive. To date not much has changed in this regard; other outcomes of students’ time abroad are either understood to be anomalies (not intended that way) or as cases where students had entered another country with a ‘double intent’, which in turn is interpreted as something illegal, or at best: ‘dubious’ or quasi-legal. In light of this it will be necessary to focus on how ideas about studying abroad have changed dramatically over the past century
from a state and industry perspective. The challenge that lies in front of us is how to understand this development.

**AID & DEVELOPMENT**

*The Colombo Fifties*

As Singh (1963) shows, from the 1870s onwards, small numbers of Indian students found their way to Oxford and Cambridge. This was partly the result of the British opening up their examinations for the Indian Civil Services. Besides preparing for these examinations, Singh also explains that in some prosperous Indian families, studying abroad had become the ‘thing’ to do. Studying abroad was something only the upper-middle and upper class could afford. You needed a certain amount of influence and connections, but most of all a considerable sum of money to be able to send your offspring overseas. One early publication which deals with Indian overseas students was written in 1935. From this article we learn that there were about 2,000 Indian students in the US and Europe at the time and many times more that number in the UK. The main subjects these students were enrolled in were medicine and education. India was still a colony and opinions on Indians ranged from the pedantic to simply racist:

Though there are still too many instances of students who ought never to have left India, there is evidence to show that the majority who seek admission to universities and colleges in this country are now on the whole well qualified to embark upon the course of study or training… The number of students who arrive in this country with little or only the vaguest idea of what course of study or training they wish to pursue is steadily decreasing… It is further noted that the Indian student community had generally gained for itself an excellent reputation, only occasionally marred by a very small minority who tend to discredit their fellow-countrymen by incurring debts, which they are unable or unwilling to meet, or by falling into evil ways. (School and Society, 1935: 84)

After the Second World War the idea of studying abroad, and who would be able to do so, changed considerably. Many countries in South and South East Asia became independent and confronted with the ‘threat’ of communism – certainly after the Communists took over Mainland China in 1949 – the Cold War brought shivers to the West. According to Rao (1979), western countries approached this problem in various ways. One way of dealing with it was by concluding security pacts and forming military alliances with countries, for instance, in East Asia. But significantly, these countries
had reached the conclusion that in order to contain the spread of Communism they had to face the reason why this had occurred in the first place. Western countries realized that the political stability of many former colonies was highly dependent on social and economic development. Besides the obvious humanitarian and economic reasons, it was also the political context that triggered western countries to provide aid in order to make sure economic and industrial development could take place in the developing countries. Consultants and advisors were sent, recommendations given and finances provided for the establishment of institutions for the training of scientists, engineers and administrators. In addition, some developed countries agreed to educate and train a certain number of students in their own institutions and at their own expense. (Ibid) Educational and scholarship opportunities were also opened up to unsponsored students from developing countries. It was, of course, made clear that these students had to return home after completing their studies so that they could assist in their countries development.

According to Fraser (1984), the first private overseas student to arrive in Australia did so in 1904. Until the Second World War, it would be mostly Australian students going abroad instead of the other way around. This situation would only change after the Fulbright Agreement was signed in the mid 1950s and funds were made available to Australian students who wished to go to the US in order to teach, study or do research. Americans also came to Australia to teach in schools and universities. (Rossiter, 1957: 3) These ‘exchanges’ were mostly about creating friendship between countries, promoting understanding of each other’s culture and most of all, for ensuring that that these countries remained allies. The Fulbright Agreement probably remains the best-known one in this field though there were also other initiatives at the time.

The Colombo Plan, a plan for co-operative economic development in South-East Asia, signed in 1950 after a meeting of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers, was also designed to help developing countries develop further, in addition to increasing understanding of each other and prevent countries from falling into Communist hands. Basically the Colombo Plan could be divided into two separate fields: economic aid and technical assistance. In the field of economic aid, developed countries made gifts to beneficiary countries in the form of equipment and capital goods. These were to be used

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48 A non-profit agency called The Institute of International Education that was founded in New York in 1919, for instance, was engaged in administering the exchange of persons, programs for governments, foundations, private organizations and colleges and universities in the United States and abroad. At the time, over 4,500 persons from 80 countries were studying and being trained in a country other than their own. Most striking was the optimistic view that the initiators had of these exchanges: “an important means to further understanding between the United States and other nations, and thus contribute to the free exchange of ideas, the advancement of knowledge and the cause of peace.” (Holland, 1957: 10)
for increasing production or improving facilities. Technical assistance, however, meant
the provision of trained personnel who were to operate these machines, build these
power stations and generally play a part in the development of the country’s resources.
In some cases such personnel were provided by the developed nations; they were sent
to developing countries to provide their services, and the bill was subsequently picked
up by the donor nation. More important though is that ‘able young men’ were sent
to developed countries where they would be trained and then would return ‘home’
to put into practice what they had learned.49 According to Education News (June 30,
1958) some 2,286 students had come to Australia for training and experience under
the auspices of the Colombo Plan. And a further 1,483 had already completed their
training and returned home.

The Colombo Plan dominated the accounts of overseas students in the fifties.
The Second World War was fresh in everybody’s memory and Europe in particular
was clearing up the rubble and busy rebuilding itself. Although the war was over, the
Cold War was about to capture the imagination of voters and politicians. Communism
was a perceived threat to freshly won world peace. Overseas students were part of a
much bigger plan to establish worldwide, non-threatening, non-aggressive and, in
particular, non-communist ties. The developed world had quickly ‘understood’ that
underdevelopment could result in the greater appeal of communist thought, and the
potential perceived threats to world peace which that entailed. Such plans may have
leaned heavily on rather simplistic assumptions, and although they seemed naively
optimistic about the effects they would have, they did serve a very serious political
agenda.

Changing Migration Laws
What was started in the fifties saw its continuation in the sixties. Overseas students
were seen as important ‘interpreters and translators’ for the United States; they would
one day go home and explain to their fellow countrymen what the United States or the
‘West’ stood for and, hopefully, this would be a cheerful tale of progress and freedom.
For the first time publications could be found on ‘actual’ overseas students. Often these
books were about how overseas students were fairing far away from home. (Morris
1960; Tanenhaus & Roth 1962) Such publications often had a strong focus on how
overseas students perceive the US in relation to their own country. This fitted nicely, of
course, with the idea that overseas students would be, in a way, future ambassadors
for the US once they had returned home.

In the early sixties, the most popular student destination for India was still the
UK, though there were increasing numbers going to the US. In Australia, in 1962, there
were only 109 Indian students. (*Education News*, 1963: 20) Indian students did play some part in the existing body of knowledge on studying abroad in the sixties. Hodgkin (1963) explains that when Indians return from having studied abroad, they hope to enter highly paid Government and commercial positions, or to go into partnerships with doctors, lawyers, or accountants from their own ‘community’. Many of the Indian overseas students he met were from ‘the Malays’ where they formed a minority. He adds that it was often the practice for parents to make considerable sacrifices to send an elder son to Britain or Australia. When this son returns, a marriage will be arranged and the dowry that he will receive from the bride’s family will be enough to cover the cost of getting his sisters married. Hodgkin seems to argue that studying abroad was mostly seen as an investment; it would increase the value of the son on the marriage market, and thus, would make it easier to marry off his sisters. Hodgkin adds that when a student decides to marry a foreign girl, or a girl who has spent her own future dowry on overseas education, it may cause considerable social and economic hardship and dissatisfaction for the family.

From the mid 1960s onwards the narrative on studying abroad shifts to the issue of non-return by overseas students. Gradually the first publications can be found on the brain drain, a topic, which was increasingly worrying politicians of western nations at the time. Much of what has been written around this period is focused on the US, which much to do with the country’s changed immigration laws (1965); from an immigration policy discriminating mainly on national origins to one of discrimination based on skill, among other criteria. Other countries, including Australia, quickly followed suit, something which is reflected in the immigration statistics at the time.

**Anchorage, Net-Loss and Non-Return**

In 1968, Charles Kindleberger concludes that the attempt to help a country often turns out to help an individual, which then results in a ‘net loss’ of talent for that country. In the same year, Ritterband published a fascinating book on the problem of non-return among Israeli students in the US. One of the major arguments he makes in this book is that many of the factors, which explain the motives for coming to the United States to study, also explain and predict the likelihood of returning to Israel. In addition, the likelihood that an Israeli student will, in fact, return is overwhelmingly determined prior to arrival in the United States. Ritterband explains, for instance, that older Israeli’s are more likely to return home, especially if they are married. Also, it is more likely that they have had some higher education in Israel and therefore, with better academic credentials, they are more likely to have a specific job commitment in Israel. Cortés (1969), writing on non-returning Filipino students, frames this in a term he calls ‘anchorage’. His study shows that migration of high-level people from the Philippines to the United States could be linked to the person’s basic attitudes toward the Philippines and with certain personal characteristics and circumstances.
Cortés summarizes that people who are weakly ‘anchored’ or loosely committed or attached, psychologically and socially, to the home country, tend to emigrate. Students who received government support, however, are less likely to emigrate. Similar to Ritterband’s findings, young people are more prone to emigrate than older people, people who are single are also more likely to emigrate – and if they have a job waiting for them back in the Philippines, they are less likely to become migrants. It is also around this time that the first publications on the medical brain drain are published; a result of the world at large becoming increasingly aware that more and more foreign medical graduates, in particular from Latin America, either migrated to the US directly or stayed on after completing their studies there (see for instance Margulies, 1969).

Already some subtle changes can be noticed in the way overseas students are discussed. Whereas first he was that guy who would help out his country and, in addition, promote the message of capitalism and freedom, now he was slowly starting to be perceived as a person who failed in both fields: the risk that he might not return to his home country meant he wouldn't be able to help his country develop and progress, and at the same time he would not be able to bring home positive tales of having befriended Americans and how much he had enjoyed living a capitalistic lifestyle among them. In fact, by the latter part of the 1960s that second reason had already largely disappeared from the pages. It is hard to say why that was, however, and speculating about it makes little sense without elaborating on, for instance, how the Cold War was developing, where the Vietnam war was heading, how the Flower Power movement had gained momentum, and how public opinion generally was changing on war and peace related matters. Yet change was in the air and the decades to come certainly showed a whole new approach to offering education to overseas students.

The Drain of Brains

In the late 1960s it had already become clear that many foreign medical graduates did not return to their home countries to work as doctors there. Van den Kroef (1970), referring to the high number of medical specialists, coming from countries such as Israel, Chile or the Dominican Republic, states that: “The very high contribution of the developing countries to U.S. medical manpower is equivalent in numbers to the entire output of 15 U.S. medical schools graduating the largest numbers of M.D.s in 1967.” (1970: 221) Van den Kroef refers to one US expert who indicated that there was a certain paradox in the whole situation where the US would provide medical aid while at the same time ‘drain’ these countries of their trained medical manpower. Indian out-migration had also captured the imagination of those with an interest in the developments at the time, as the following passage shows:
In May 1968, a report by the Indian Institute of Applied Manpower Research on Indian migration to the U.S. stated that there were currently 16,614 Indians on the waiting list for admission under existing U.S. immigration laws, it is likely that the outflow of Indian ‘professionals, technical and kindred workers’ will continue at a high rate. Moreover, the exodus of the skilled from India is stimulated by unemployment: in March 1968, for example, Kamalesh Ray, head of the Directorate of Scientific and Technical Personnel of the Government of India’s Council of Scientific Industrial Research, estimated that at least 20,000 Indian engineers, both university graduates and diploma holders, were currently unemployed – other estimates run as high as 80,000 (out of a present total of 135,000 engineering graduated and 180,000 engineering diploma holders in the country). (Van den Kroef 1970: 227)

Van den Kroef adds that, in 1968 there were nearly 15,000 Indian engineering graduates expected to enter the Indian job market. Already it was estimated that there were about ten to twelve thousand Indian scientists and technologists living on a, more or less, semi-permanent basis overseas. According to a survey, it was found that 245 of the 1326 Indian physicians working in the US had decided to settle there permanently. Furthermore it could be concluded that by the end of 1966 there were already 1143 Indians in the US holding faculty positions in institutions of higher learning. (Ibid) It illustrates clearly the situation in which overseas students found themselves in the early seventies. As Ritterband (1970) also concluded at the time:

[…] a very large proportions of the foreign students in the United States become immigrants (to cite but one of many such observations, approximately eight percent of Jordanian students never return). The student visa is often a device for emigration. Almost half of the science, technology, and medical immigrants from the developing nations originally came to the United States as students or trainees. (1970: 72)

Robert G. Myers’ book Education and Migration, published in 1972, further delves into the relationship between overseas education and migration. During the sixties the problem of the brain drain had already captured the attention of policy-makers in the US and elsewhere, yet the problem was largely understood in a rather narrow way, meaning that all the problems were attributed to the flow of professionals from the developing to the developed world; something to which people started referring as ‘reverse foreign aid’. (1972:1) In another article Myers focuses on Peruvian students
studying in the US and argues that overseas training may be used by students as a springboard for more permanent migration. (1974) The article shows how big the impact of studying abroad was on some developing nations and how much these countries had come to depend on this. One of the more negative effects this had on Peru was that its balance of payments was suffering as parents sent money abroad to support their children. However, much more worrisome was the fact that many of these students would not return to Peru after graduation. (1974: 72) Myers explains that most students who were not planning on returning had already made this decision ‘at home’, as immigrant visas typically had to be obtained prior to going abroad. According to Myers, the idea that most emigration among students was caused by exposure to a ‘foreign’ culture was. (Ibid: 79) Curiously, he seems to neither realize nor acknowledge that this exposure to a foreign culture or lifestyle could have already started at home. It seems inevitable that success stories of family members and friends already studying or having graduated in the US would have filtered home.

Alejandro Portes, focusing on the Argentinean brain drain, estimated the total loss of professionals and technicians to Argentina to be about 4000 over a ten-year period. (1976: 489) To Portes there was little doubt that the brain drain was conditioned, at the most general level, by political and economic imbalances in the world system. “Emigration is, from this standpoint, the human equivalent and reflection of international arrangements through which weaker economies are subordinated to the interests and priorities of the stronger ones.” (Ibid: 491) Glaser and Habers (1974, 1976) stated that academic benefits were still the most common reason for studying abroad and that the prestige of having been overseas to study is a factor to consider when looking into the reasons why students wish to go abroad. They deny that the desire to gain work experience in a developed country is synonymous with the desire to emigrate. In their research few students admitted that they studied abroad in order to explore the prospects of living there. The reasons for studying abroad vary quite a bit by home country and specialty. (1974: 234) Entering the debate on non-returning students, they conclude that students with scholarships or special grants are more likely to return than those who study abroad privately. They note, however, that the source of the scholarship is crucial. Grants from the government or employers in the home country often lead to the student returning after graduation, but grants from a university abroad are associated with emigration. “Some exchange programs based on loans may boomerang by encumbering the returnee with debts and by inducing him to seek remunerative employment abroad.” (Ibid: 237) What is particularly relevant about these different ‘conclusions’ that were reached at the time is that scholars did not just disagree but that the discussion itself had become more elaborate. It clearly shows that certain issues were gaining prominence.
Australia in the Seventies

From 1973 to 1975 the Education Research Unit (ERU) of the Australian National University conducted a nationwide survey of overseas students in Australia; a study which showed that although the countries of origin are different, the social background, attitudes, experiences and future plans of overseas students were often rather similar. (Rao 1979: xii) Lakshmana Rao, author of *Brain Drain and Foreign Students* — a study of the attitudes and intentions of foreign students in Australia, the USA, Canada and France — writes in the introduction that the main aim of most developed nations that receive foreign students through overseas study programs is still to transfer knowledge and skills. According to Rao, an overwhelming majority of overseas students is aware of this and accordingly lived up to these expectations by returning to their home countries after graduation. Rao adds that there were also good indications that private students did the same, provided that they had something to return to. Rao’s study is especially relevant when it comes to understanding how overseas students were doing in Australia in this period. He remarks that some developed countries, such as Canada and Australia — with vast natural resources and small populations — regarded a certain number of immigrants as necessary for economic development at home. The UK and the US “experience for one reason or the other dynamic and persistent shortages in fields such as science, medicine, and engineering.” (Ibid: 5) In most developed countries the demand for highly-qualified workers had grown so fast that the nations’ education systems couldn’t keep up with demand. This was generally due to the excessively restrictive practices followed by many professional associations with regard to entry into these professions from within the country. As a result, there was a need to import professionals from abroad. (Ibid) At the same time, national educational policies and structures weren’t functioning either as they produced more highly educated workers than jobs available for them. In addition, salary levels and wage structures were often unattractive and hardly reflected a person’s talent and level of education.

Rao’s research shows similar findings to other studies about reasons for studying abroad which were conducted in this period. Overseas students go abroad because the quality of education in the home country is low, or there is a lack of proper training facilities, or there is a complete absence of some fields of study, or educational facilities are more diverse/better/superior overseas. Sometimes they go overseas for the prestige it will bring them at home, or for the prospect of a better job or higher pay, and last but certainly not least, some leave because they are discriminated against as minority groups in their home country. The motivations for coming specifically to Australia are different though: an important reason is proximity to the home country, another is the easier admission compared to the UK or the US, scholarships awards granted by Australian government and universities are also a factor, and so is a desire to see the world. What also figures in the decision-for-Australia-equation are colourful reports from friends and family and the idea of a lower cost of living than elsewhere. (Ibid: 44-46)
Overseas Education in Transition

In the second half of the 1970s, Australia increasingly became an alternative to other, more traditional, student destinations. For nearly three quarters of the students who were part of Rao’s research Australia was not the first choice and more than a quarter of the students did not even mention Australia among the first three ‘preferred’ countries of destination. (1979:61) Why then did these students end up in Australia? Was it just to be nearer to home? However likely that may sound, it is still a good 14 hour flight from Mumbai to Melbourne. London can be reached in a little under ten. Rao does not really address these questions. Private students were able to apply for permanent residency while in Australia but still had to meet the requirements of a normal migrant. And as migrants were being selected based on skills, a student who specialized in the wrong (‘unwanted’) field would not be permitted to stay. And even if he was, he would have a hard time getting a job as cartel-like restrictions, imposed by professional associations and trade unions, could easily prevent foreigners from entering the country and taking up these jobs. (p. 105-6)

Fraser (1984) relates how in the sixties Australia’s overseas student program was characterized by three different objectives. First of all the aim of the plan was to provide indirect aid to developing nations in the form of training. Secondly, Australia was to foster direct technical assistance to regional countries and connected to this, thirdly, the strict requirement that students would return home after they had completed their studies. This final objective witnessed some important changes under the Whitlam government in 1973. Overseas students were allowed to stay in Australia if they adhered to immigration procedures. The private overseas student programs also evolved as greater emphasis was placed on developing or extending specific cultural and educational agreements on a bilateral basis. The new programs, which were started in the same year, were characterized by aid, development, cultural exchanges and, last but not least, modified immigration.

Not unexpectedly, considerable numbers of Chinese students from Hong Kong, Singapore, but predominantly from Malaysia, as well as students from the Indian subcontinent, made use of the newfound opportunity to apply for permanent residency after their tertiary program of studies was completed. This was characterized and criticized as a deliberate policy of brain drain by many of the countries of the Asian region. (Fraser 1984: 291)

The brain drain discussion featured high on both the political as well as the academic agenda in the 1970s. What had largely started in the sixties, mostly because of changed immigration policies in developed countries, continued to have a considerable impact on both home as well as settlement country. Yet the topic of the brain drain slowly
disappeared from the pages. Studies on overseas students continued to be published though. Goodwin & Nacht (1984), for instance, focused on topics such as alienations, affection, frustration, progress, and enrichment of Brazilian students overseas. A similar focus can be found in an article on Malaysian students abroad by Barber, Altbach & Myers (1984) and Cummings (1984) on students from Iran and Burma. Gerald W. Fry (1984), on Thai and Costa Rican students, does return to the seventies brain drain discussion; and although he argues that there is relatively little, if any, analytical empirical work at the macro/national level to assess the economic and political impact of study abroad, in the end he offers nothing new. As possible positive effects of studying abroad he mentions, for instance, that studying abroad can have the effect of social change, as students will bring home new ideas. Other positive effects were the development of foreign language competencies, the development of regional consciousness and greater sensitivity to the need for cultural democracy, international economic effects and foreign exchange remittances, enhancement of mobility opportunities through study abroad, and finally, cross-cultural enrichment effects. (1984: 204-8) There are also negative effects to note, however, and the first that is mentioned is that of foreign exchange costs. Other negative effects were, according to Fry, individual opportunity costs, socialization into a consumer culture, incorporation into the structure of the dominating center (through study abroad with its associated value changes and language skill development, individuals can easily be incorporated into the global system of transnational corporations), and the problem of cultural marginality. (Ibid: 208-10)

Many of the authors previously mentioned are found in an issue of the Comparative Education Review published in 1984, which featured a special on overseas students. One article dealing solely with overseas students in Australia was written by Stewart E. Fraser. In it we read that in 1962 there were 12,049 overseas students and trainees (both secondary and tertiary) in Australia, of whom 10,903, or more than 90 per cent, were privately or home-government sponsored. The rest had come to Australia under various development-aid schemes such as the Colombo Plan. Two decades later the number of overseas students in Australia was approximately 20,000, of which, again, about 90 per cent were either privately or home-government sponsored. It wasn’t only the number of overseas students which had changed considerably; in 1962 Australia had predominantly been a provider of specialized and technical education to nearly 70 per cent of overseas students but in 1982 Australia had managed to transform itself into a predominant supplier of tertiary education to nearly 75 per cent of private overseas students. Meanwhile the proportion of overseas students had gradually dropped from just over 11 per cent in 1962 to seven per cent in 1982. (Fraser 1984: 280) Basically this could be attributed to the fact that during this phase worldwide student enrolments in developed nations increased considerably and, in fact, these enrolments grew much faster than the number of overseas students.
In the mid eighties the number of publications on overseas students quickly declined. What was being published often had the character of a manual in which it could be read how to deal with overseas students and how to make sure the most is made of the situation. This could all be linked to a very important development at that time: the commodification of higher education.

THE PRODUCT OF EDUCATION

Education as a Product

The commodification of higher education was strongly supported by business and industrial groups, and served conservative political interests. In both Britain and Australia people who belonged to these groups were considered the ‘New Right’. (Jansen, 1988) During this phase education increasingly came to be seen as an investment; education was being valued by both individuals and governments based on the returns it would produce. Jansen uses Lindblom’s term ‘consumer market sovereignty system’ (1977) to explain what higher education was now being turned into. In this system the government abstains from central direction and production responds only to consumer demand. The argument that this will ultimately lead to increased efficiency, effectiveness, equity and morale in higher education, is still being voiced today.

In Australia, commodification of higher education came down to the introduction of tertiary fees, private funding of research and, most importantly here, the export of education services. (Ibid: 388) Yet it took a while to get there. The Immigrations Restrictions Acts (better known as the ‘White Australia Policy’) had been abolished under the Whitman (Labor) government in 1973. That year, a review of private overseas programs led to the decision to abandon the economic development criteria for entry. A limit was subsequently set of 10,000 private overseas students per year. In addition, applications were supposed to be rejected if a the same course was also offered in the home country. (See also Williams 1989: 11; Andressen, 1997) In the same year Whitlam took office, tuition fees were abolished, including those for overseas students. This led to a situation where, from 1974 until the early 1980s, neither local nor overseas students paid any tuition fees.

Although the Colombo Plan had already brought the first wave of Asian students to Australia, it took the Australian government until the mid-1960s to officially endorse the growing Asian student program. Prior to that, the University of

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50 A good example in this regard is Maxine K. Rochester’s book Foreign Students in American Library Education. Impact on Home Countries (1986), which made some mention of the brain drain but was, in the end, much more occupied with the question of whether what is being taught on library education in the US is relevant for home countries and how improvements could be made in this field.
Melbourne had been the first to get involved in Asian education, quickly followed by other tertiary institutions including Monash University and University of New South Wales. In 1969, the Australian university vice-chancellors formed the Australian-Asian Universities’ Cooperation Scheme, which aimed to strengthen the teaching, research and administrative capacities of universities in neighbouring countries. (Shu and Hawthorne 1996: 67-8) The abolition of tertiary fees in 1974 caused considerable controversy as it was revealed, at the beginning of the 1980s, that the ‘hidden’ education subsidy of private overseas students had increased significantly. (Ibid: 68; also Williams: 1989) Part of the controversy was over the fact that a number of recipient countries had achieved economic growth rates greater than those of all OECD nations (except Japan), thus raising the question of the appropriateness of educational aid. And the brain drain discussion of the 1970s had already shown that after Labour’s rise to power, Whitlam becoming Prime Minister and the subsequent abolition of the White Australia Policy in 1973, the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs was becoming increasingly worried that study in Australia could represent de facto immigration entry rather than developing nation aid. Apparently, evidence could be presented that three quarters of the private Asian students completing Australian matriculation in 1969 had achieved citizenship by the end of the following decade. (Ibid)

Slowly the good old days of no-fees and development aid were becoming something of the past; an Overseas Student Charge (OSC) of between $1,500 and $2,500 was introduced, for instance. Another important change was that students were now forced to return to their home countries for two years after graduation before they were able to apply for permanent residency. Gradually the OSC was increased and by 1987 overseas students on university postgraduate awards were also obliged to pay this fee. Of course not everybody was as willing to accept these new changes. Some argued that the cost of training overseas students should be weighed against the creation of international goodwill, the development of cultural exchange, the possibilities of enhanced trade, and the inflow of funds, which accompanied overseas students. (Jansen 1988: 391) The Report of the Committee to Review the Australian Overseas Aid Programme of 1984, better known as the Jackson Report, illustrates how much the discussion on overseas students had changed.

The demand for education services throughout the Asian Region is likely to be quite large in the next 20 years. The expansion of Australian education to meet this demand would encourage cultural exchange and tourism. It would provide jobs for Australians directly, and there would be multiplier effects through the provision of food, shelter, clothing and entertainment for students. In American university towns, one “town” job is generally added for every additional “gown”
enrolled. The development of an education “export industry”, particularly in the graduate field, would benefit the economy directly, and through research it would be linked to the “high tech” and “new tech” industries, which Australia so strongly wished to develop. (pp. 93-4, as referred to in Jansen, 1988: 392)

From 1985 onwards the numbers of Asian students entering Australia skyrocket. In 1985 there were only 16,000 of them; five years later, this number had grown to a staggering 60,000. Overall, however, numbers started to decline after that, mostly due to a fall in short-term student arrivals in response to tightening policy towards the entry of non-formal (short course) students. Overstaying was already considered a problem in Australia and the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DIEA) was also considering further tightening of entry criteria for students from selected overseas countries. As Shu and Hawthorne (1996: 65-66) write, since the first decade of the Asian student program, Malaysian and Indonesian students were known to apply for PR after graduation. As they show, around the mid-nineties there was a considerable increase in the number of students who did so.

After the introduction of an Overseas Student Charge (OSC), which had reached 55 per cent of real course fees in 1988, the rule was introduced that Asian students were obliged to return home for two years as a pre-condition to eligibility for permanent residency. (Williams, 1989) Apparently this was not enough to curb the rising numbers of overstayers and non-returnees as the Goldring Report\textsuperscript{51} (commissioned by DIEA) argued; full charges would probably function as an active disincentive for overseas student enrolment, and would repudiate the original concept of broad regional aid. The ‘hidden’ subsidies were to remain and the OSC set at 30 to 40 per cent of real education costs. Postgraduate students, however, should be exempted from this. “Full fee payments should not be accessible to Australian tertiary institutions, given the need to avoid endangering academic standards and threatening ‘the quality of education offered to Australian students’. ” (Shu & Hawthorne 1996: 69; referring to Goldring 1984: 5)

While the Goldring Report argued that full fee payments should not be allowed as it would endanger academic standards and the quality of education offered to Australian students (William 1989: 23; Jackson 1984), the Jackson Report did not exactly agree with the committee on this point. The (further) internationalization of Australian higher education was too important and they argued that discouraging

\textsuperscript{51} For a rather useful overview of all the different reports and committees with respect to the Australian history of overseas education, please refer to the \textit{Australian University Handbook} of the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee, available online: http://www.avcc.edu.au
overseas students from entering would harm not only harm Australia’s foreign relations and deprive the community of cultural contacts but also neglect a potential source of export earnings. (Jackson, 1984: 12) This last ‘benefit’ was obviously the most important one though it seems as though the other points were given equal weight. The way Shu and Hawthorne elaborate on the Jackson Report is enlightening:

The marketing of Australian higher education programme to Asia had the capacity to be dramatically streamlined, fast tracked and expanded. In the process, existing ‘excessively regulatory and bureaucratic’ entry conditions should be reformed and a wide range of fee-for-service short courses should be offered to take advantage of the virtually untapped training market. (Shu and Hawthorne 1996: 69)

The recommendations made in the Jackson Report led to a transformation of Australia’s higher education and training sectors. (Shu and Hawthorne, 1996; Hughes and Goldring, 1988) As Jones (1986) indicates, it was from 1984 onwards that education was perceived as something that could be traded (Andressen, 1997). In 1985, the Australian Minister for Education adopted a new overseas student policy, one that largely embraced the key recommendations of the Jackson Report. The interest for overseas students in Australian tertiary institutions increased considerably after this. As mentioned before, already 75 per cent of the overseas students in Australia were originally from Asia. The old days of government controlling the entry of overseas students were over; now universities and colleges were encouraged “to increase their incomes (and to earn foreign exchanges) by charging full-cost fees to private overseas students. The institutions were given the incentive to do so by the right to retain the whole of the recurrent component of fees … and, from 1988, the whole of the capital component.” (Shu & Hawthorne 1996: 70; ref. to Williams 1989: 5-6)

What can be observed today in India, for instance, where local papers are full of ads for Australian universities and regular educational fests are organized to lure Indian students to Aussie shores, basically found its origin in these dramatic changes. From 1988 onwards, almost every Australian university or college - and in particular short-course providers - was vigorously targeting the Asian market. The Australian government was quick to step in as well, providing annual export marketing grants of up to $200,000 to assist institutions with establishing and marketing courses abroad. With the easing of student visa rules the same year, all quotas concerning enrolments in local courses were also removed. (Shu & Hawthorne 1996: 70)

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By 1988 almost 50,000 overseas students could be found in Australia, of which nearly half were ELICOS53 or other short course students. More than 18,000 students were studying for secondary/tertiary degrees. Around this time one of the fastest growing groups of overseas students came from China. In an article with the enlightening title ‘From Student to Citizen: A Survey of Students from the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in Australia’, Mobo Gao and Xi’an Liu (1998) write that most Chinese students were initially government-sponsored or exchange students. This started to change though when Australia launched its education export policy in 1986. Gao and Liu’s findings show something interesting about the situation many overseas students, not only Chinese, were finding themselves in.

Since the late 1980s, a Chinese student applying for a visa to study English in Australia has been required to pay at least $6,000 in advance, an amount equal to an average wage earner’s twenty years’ earnings in China at the time. But students were ready to borrow this astronomical amount to go to Australia because they assumed that they would not have to return to China until enough money had been made in Australia to pay off their debts and make a profit. The students’ hidden agenda was not that only would their debts be paid off, but they would also return home with money and modern knowledge that would enhance their social status, the so-called yi jin huan xiang (return hometown in silk robes). Better still would be the possibility of staying abroad as an overseas Chinese. (Gao & Liu, 1998: 30)

By 1989 there were about 18,000 PRC citizens in Australia, most of whom held student visas. By the middle of 1993, 26,000 more had come; most of whom had come as students between October 1989 and June 1990. (Ibid: 27-8) As the above quotation illustrates, Chinese students were quite willing to pay high fees in order to leave China and study somewhere else. This process of Asian student migration to Australia continued into the 1990s and continues to this very day.

*Overseas Education in the New Millennium*

On the brink of the nineties, slowly approaching the new millennium, we find that the discussion on the role of the overseas student has completely changed. In the fifties and sixties, and even in the seventies, overseas education seemed part and parcel of foreign aid and development plans. The brain drain discussion, which started in the

53 ELICOS: English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (private)
1960s and lasted until the early 1980s, showed something different about overseas students though: non-return had become a serious problem, working against the ‘best intentions’ of developed (western/capitalistic) nations. But with increasing numbers of local students opting for higher education in developed countries and governments simultaneously facing serious budget cuts, the commodification of higher education slowly began dominating the discussions. Countries quickly realized that ‘selling’ education could have a positive effect on their own economies as well as provide enough funds for universities to survive. Put simply, the overseas student became a source of money for many countries, including Australia. A new kind of industry, one producing and selling education, was born.

Full fee paying overseas students brought with them another issue: whereas in the past countries had not wanted their overseas students to stay-on simply because that would be counter-productive, now it was hardly their place to encourage students to go back home for the very same reason. Students were paying serious amounts of money to study abroad and many in the industry had actually argued that they were simply responding to a consumer-driven response to local undersupply of university places (Ziguras 2005: 99). For universities, at least, there was no reason to be ‘worried’ about non-return; it was simply no longer their ‘business’. At the same time, new studies were also conducted to find out more about students who did not return to their home countries after completing their studies. Throughout the nineties studies would appear on the subject, but with the ongoing commodification of education and the farewell to ideological motives for offering such education, studies dealing with the issue seemed to lack a certain focus. One of these studies was conducted by Bratsberg (1995), for which he used administrative microdata from the US Immigration and Naturalization Service. The data related to various years and was derived from 69 source countries. Basically Bratsberg reaches the same conclusions as Rao had done in 1979. Bratsberg refers to Apraku (1991) who concluded that the economic situation in the home country was the most important factor in the return decision; and the monetary reward to the current job the primary reason why a person decides to stay. This may sound like a significant research result, but in fact the author presents nothing new. Most brain drain authors in the 1970s already agreed with each other on this point. Bratsberg mentions that the propensity to remain in the US varies significantly between different countries, but that this variation could be explained by differences in economic and political conditions. In particular, students tend to return to rich and closed countries and to countries that value their investments in education highly. Yet the world was changing rapidly and related studies relied heavily on the assumptions of the old days when there was little evidence that the developing world was, in fact, developing. Meanwhile Asian economies were gearing up and the middle classes in the Newly Industrialized Countries now had more money to spend than ever before. India’s economy was opened up in 1991 and in the second half of the
1990s the electronic revolution got underway resulting in a start-up boom of IT related companies. The world was becoming increasingly connected and, to borrow Harvey’s (1989) term ‘time-space compression’, could speed up its dealings with each other to new heights. The brain drain discussion was about to enter a whole new phase, one coloured by new topics of conversations such as skilled migration, monetary remittances and transnationalism. Overseas students were about to play a key role in this, though it would take some time before policy makers recognized this too.

The Australian ‘Success’ Story

Australia’s early successes on the overseas student market had not gone unnoticed as a study done by Bart Zijlstra (1998) for Nuffic shows. In 1997, Zijlstra went to Australia to see what could be learned from their experiences so that the Netherlands could develop its own plans regarding overseas students. In 1996 there were 143,000 overseas students in Australia, and the education industry generated, in total, approximately $3 billion in export revenue. (1998: 9) As Zijlstra explains, participating in the international student market was no longer a matter of choice for Australian universities as budget cuts and salary increases had made it necessary to attract overseas students. (Ibid: 10) The early nineties, though, had initially seen a major setback in offering overseas education. Reports about unfair competition and misleading information from certain course providers (mostly TAFE 54 colleges), had damaged the image of Australian education. The Australian International Education Foundation (AIEF), founded in 1994, was put in charge of repairing some of this damage and coordinating the generic marketing of institutions abroad. Through the AIEF, education providers and the government became partners, promoting and marketing Australia’s education and training services overseas. AIEF consists of counsellors overseas and shop fronts known as Australian Education Centres. Furthermore, a law (the so-called ESOS-act, see also chapter 5) was put in place to ensure that overseas students would receive a high standard of education and training in Australia. In addition, courses open to international students now had to be approved by the relevant State/Territory authority and be registered in a so-called Commonwealth Register (CRICOS). Finally, arrangements were made to ensure that money prepaid by students overseas was protected. (Zijlstra, 1998: 11) IDP 55, founded in 1969 by the Australian universities as a not-for-profit company, was soon to play a key role in offering and marketing overseas education abroad. IDP was quick to put special emphasis on their not-for-

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54 Technical and Further Education.

55 Originally IDP meant: International Development Program. The abbreviation is no longer used this way. People now simply use IDP in reference to the non-profit recruitment company. The meaning of the letters is no longer relevant or important. One could compare it to computer giant IBM. Most people will know what kind of company IBM is but not what the letters themselves stand for.
profit character and profits and surpluses were fed back into education from the start. Currently IDP has a recruitment network in more than 50 countries; the result of careful planning from the mid nineties onwards. Besides recruiting overseas students in many countries, IDP also acts as a broker between institutions, foreign governments and multilateral funding agencies. International activities include project and contract management, fellowship administration, international education conferences, education promotions, exhibitions and so on.

By the dawn of the new millennium the Australian education industry had become so professional and streamlined that one could almost forget about the overseas students who still had to say ‘yes’ to a particular course, college or university. Yet scholars have continuously been mapping various (prospective) markets for further exploration and development. A study conducted by Marika Vicziany in 1995, entitled *India Market Research Report. The potential for exporting Australian educational goods, services and expertise to India*, speaks volumes in this respect; it makes perfectly clear where the ambitions lay. A report by Tim Mazzarol *et al* (2001), published just after the millennium, had a similar approach; it explores the question of why Indian students choose to study in a country other than Australia. When analysing students’ motivations for studying in Australia, studies avoid or barely acknowledge the question of migration. Vicziany (1995) does mention the issue but argues that studies (mostly on the US situation) do not agree on the apparent link. Others appear not to be aware of the issue, yet it would be naïve to think that the issue had not been raised in the research process. The vast body of readily available knowledge on the brain drain and non-return should at least have indicated that when exploring the reasons why students go to a particular country, the option of becoming full-fledged migrants might well be part of the decision making process. Although it is impossible to be sure of this, it appears that the market-oriented researches on overseas students were very much aware of the difficult position they were in. Admitting that migration could be a motivation for studying abroad could be dangerous, especially if it could also be seen as a marketable asset. It would not only show that students were interested in more than just education, but that they, as an industry, were considering diversifying into different non-education related activities. It is an issue that the industry still grapples with. And so the issue of non-return remains awkwardly absent from the market-oriented researches that were conducted in the 1990s and the early years of the new millennium.

*Overseas Education in the Shop Window*

Studying overseas has become a tradable commodity. It is something you can buy, invest in, take out loans for – it is something which comes with marketing and promotion strategies, with laws to guarantee its quality, and organizations to look over the shoulder of those who are ‘producing’ and ‘selling’ it. At the same time, the
overseas student has evolved. From a rather sorry figure wanting to help his country, travelling down dusty roads from his native village where his family have waved him goodbye, not knowing where he would go but full of hopes for safe return and a better future; this very same student has been transformed into a highly informed and sophisticated customer, one who knows that there is fierce competition in the education market, one who searches the Internet for the best deals, visits education fairs and local education offices where umbrella organizations do everything they can to convince him that their country is the best place to go. He has become a consumer who discusses options with online friends all over the world, visits banks to discuss loans and pay-back schemes, and most of all feels that he has the advantage of a buyer’s market where he can make, and is expected to have, certain demands.

What started in the 1980s with the commodification of higher education increasingly became an issue in the later phases of the 1990s and remains so to this very day, as recent articles show. The number of overseas students entering Australia continued to grow into the new millennium (Andressen 2001) and the country now has the second highest proportion of overseas students after Switzerland (Ziguras 2005: 99). Around 2002 Australia was the third largest exporter of education, after the US and the UK. (Marginson 2006: 9) The numbers of Indian students in particular had grown rapidly. In 1990, before the liberalisation of the Indian economy took place, there were 378 Indian students studying in Australia. Just a few years later this number had increased to several thousands, and around the new millennium it was estimated that there were more than 10,000 Indians studying in Australia. Yet this is only a quarter of how many there were enrolled in onshore Australian institutions in 2007. The US still remains the preferred destination for most nationalities, but the other, newer ‘destinations’ such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand continue to develop rapidly, offering tailor-made courses that appeal directly to particular/local needs, as well as courses that might appeal to future migrants (though they are rarely ever marketed in this way). Meanwhile Asia itself is also busy developing an education industry. China is in the process of setting up universities and colleges that will one day appeal to a much greater group abroad than it does now. Already students from India go to China for medical degrees and though the numbers are still low and the initial reviews of the quality on offer not very favorable, many within the industry agree that it is only a matter of time before China will be a serious competitor as a cheaper alternative to more traditional study-abroad destinations. In April 2006 Australian education minister Julie Bishop already predicted that the rise of China would trigger a shake-up of Australian universities. She went on to encourage the

‘university chiefs’ to enter into strategic alliances with other universities, as well as to consider mergers, in order to stay competitive. (*The Australian*, 19 April 2006)

*Overseas Students in a Broader and More Complex Context*

If we look at more recent publications on studying abroad, we find that nowadays studying abroad is often placed and understood in the context of globalization. As Ravinder Sidhu (2004) argues, the international education industry in Australia is premised on an imaginary of the globe as a free market of tradable commodities. She argues that in the Australian case, universities operate in a “discursive space where selling education to international students works with a neoliberal text to make universities financially independent from governments and globally competitive.” (Sidhu 2004: 56) As with any other company that wants to be financially independent and remain globally competitive, what is being sold depends on the market out there. On being asked what his core business was, a director of a perfume company once argued that he was selling dreams; perhaps a university can argue the same. It certainly has to grapple with questions such as, what is it that we are selling; what is it the market expects from us? In the past the answer would simply have been ‘quality education’, but knowing that students have all kinds of motivations which play a part in the decision making process, universities now have marketing departments to figure this out for them. Advertisement campaigns for universities located in and near the Gold Coast and Brisbane clearly zoom in on the surfing and beach cultures in those areas, whereas universities located in the inner cities of Melbourne and Sydney tend to put the fast-paced action of city life much more to the fore.

On a more general level, Australia as a country, not traditionally known as an educational power, also needed to establish itself as a credible brand in order to become a successful player in the highly competitive global education market. The marketing image of Australia that is now being used, and one that appears to work well, is that of Australia as a safe, friendly, multicultural, non-racist and non-violent country. (See also Sidhu 2004: 57) In particular, the image of being a multicultural country is a new marketing gimmick being used; a sort of Benetton inspired happiness that makes any kind of overseas student feel welcome to the country. The idea that there are other students from a range of different nations; that one is not alone as a foreigner in a ‘white country’ is apparently becoming more important in the decision-making process of overseas students. At the same time multiculturalism is often associated with less positive ideas and Australia is no exception as recent articles by, for instance, Robert Lewis (2004) and Michael Singh (2004) show. As Ravinder Kaur Sidhu observes, “references to international students in the Australian media tend to reinforce their

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57 The author refers to: Kenway & Langmead, 1998; Marginson, 2000, 2002; Van Damme, 2001
position as ‘the other’ by textually linking students with illegal immigration (*No entry under false pretences*), organized crime and declining academic standards (*Marking inquiry exposes glitches, Marks and Sparks*).” (2004: 61)58 It goes without saying, of course, that these images never make into the promotional materials used at education fairs organized in countries such as India.

The image that is being sold to overseas student is often at odds with the image that locals in the receiving nations ‘receive’ through their own media. I will not analyse here what is currently being used as promotion material by, for instance, IDP but it is safe to say that Australia is being touted as an almost mythical world, which would fit well in an early episode of Star Trek. It basically comes down to the following: Australia is multicultural, friendly, safe and cosmopolitan. The message communicated is one of ‘being in the right place’ and one of ‘this will be your first step towards a successful career’. One sees pictures of (mostly white) Australian students mingling with overseas students, studying in a leisurely environment where the sun always shines, the palmtops wave lusciously and the grass is always green. Indian students find themselves in this make-believe world when they start orienting themselves on the study abroad options in Australia when still in India. It is an idea that greatly appeals to the Indian middle classes, who often already have certain fictionalised ideas about countries such as Australia. In this sense such images tend to reinforce each other and it will be no surprise that such ‘Disneyfied’ ideas of Australia sometimes lead to great disappointments.

**The Education Industry in Practice**

And so we find ourselves in the ‘here and now’ where Australia considers its education industry one of its most important export industries, on which thousands of jobs depend, and universities are increasingly relying on money from full fee paying overseas students. In the past such countries were seen as in need of development aid in the form of overseas education; now they have become lucrative sources of income for the further development of economies of already highly developed countries. And not just that; the economic developments in such countries are closely monitored to evaluate the way markets are developing. An economic crisis in, for instance, China, resulting in dropping rates of students coming in, would seriously affect universities with a high percentage of Chinese students.

At the end of 2006, the Australian education industry was estimated to be worth 9.8 billion Australian dollars. (*WA Business News*, October 9, 2006) It was estimated that overseas students spend an average of $517 per week; not included in this figure are airfares, remittances and funds used to purchase property. (*Business*
An earlier study in 2005 had already showed that most students (72%) earned less (not more than $200) than they spend on a weekly basis (The Australian, 30 November 2005) and thus it is no surprise then that they have a fairly positive effect on the country’s trade balance. (ABC Online, October 4, 2006) Indian overseas students spent $585 million dollar in 2005, an article in The Australian (March 26, 2006) reveals. Various Australian States had meanwhile also made their own calculations. As The Daily Telegraph reported on November 21 (2006) overseas students had injected $553 in the local South Australian economy. Adelaide, the state’s capital, was meanwhile attracting record numbers of new overseas students. Besides tuition fees, students spent their money on accommodation, transport and shopping. In the state of Victoria, and it’s capital Melbourne, the situation was no different. Already in 2004-5 the education industry was worth $2 billion in exports, attracting almost 35% of all overseas students coming to Australia. (The Age, November 11, 2006)

Yet, there was also reason enough for caution. In January 2006, Australian federal opposition warned Curtin University not to rely too heavily on funds paid by overseas students. Already the university had earned over 24% of its revenue from overseas students in 2003, and this percentage had likely increased since then. This reliance on overseas students’ money was seen as putting the university at risk. Yet, the increased income had also enabled the university to establish additional services and facilities that would otherwise not have been possible. (ABC Online, January 6, 2006) Macquarie University was in a similar situation with a quarter of its income coming from overseas students and 32 percent of its students originating from other countries. (The Age, January 12, 2006) In total six universities, among which RMIT, already relied on overseas student fees for more than 20 percent of their income in 2003. (The Age, January 6, 2006)

Such dependency on foreign money of course had more practical downsides too. As a report in 2006 had noted, there was an incentive for universities to allow less competent full-fee paying overseas students to proceed with their courses with lower English levels than would normally be required for entry. Others were warning that rumors of eroding academic standards would eventually lead to a decline in the demand for seats at Australian universities. (SMH, September 18, 2006) In addition, competition from other countries was increasing rapidly. And indeed, at the end of 2006 it clearly seemed as if overseas students’ enrolments were down, causing alarm among the vice-chancellors of Australia’s top universities. As professor Glyn Davis said in an interview with The Australian, “[i]t’s not that we’re doing anything wrong, it’s just that students who once could go to America, Britain or Australia can now go to about 150 different countries offering English-language courses at prestigious institutions.” (The Australian, January 2, 2007) Private operators in Australia itself, meanwhile, were also perceived as becoming serious competitors, offering complete vocational programs and even degrees through partnerships with universities.
Over Dependency and Connected Dangers

In practice overseas education had become a serious business; and that business brings an interesting paradox. On the one hand, the growth of Asian economies means more business for Australian universities. Besides the fact that more Asians are actually able to afford overseas education than ever before, many Asian countries simply do not have the educational infrastructure to meet the demand for higher education at home. On the other hand, the fact that some countries are now discovering the potential of having an education industry of their own is perceived as a threat to the future of many Australian universities. And this is where the old developing ideals have finally gone bankrupt. There was a time when this would have been perceived as exactly as what was being intended, the developing world developing (with the help of neatly returning overseas students); now though, students no longer coming, because of developments at home, is considered a major set-back for an industry worth billions of Australian dollars. Today’s overseas students come to Australia because Asia is developing rapidly and its middle classes have more money to spend than ever. And it is this development that Australian universities have come not only come to depend on but also, in a sense, can no longer function independently of.

The over dependency of Australian universities on income from overseas students will continue to play an important role in the following two chapters. The next chapter will specifically deal with how the education and immigration industries are dependent on each other and how this leads to situations where academic quality is questioned, and doubts are raised about whether the right type of skilled migrant is being recruited. Analyzing this situation will bring us closer to an understanding of the main questions raised in the first chapter. How do students move through a process where they are both students and migrants at the same time? Who else is involved in this process and most importantly: who else benefits from this situation?

The aim of locating mobility in-between is not only about finding a middle ground where migration and transnationalism meet; it is also about problematizing the difficult situation of finding oneself in the middle of various roles. This wearing of different hats depending on the situation, sometimes wearing multiple hats at the same time, feeling the pressure of obligations coming from various directions (having to pass one’s units, do well on exams, make enough money to survive, start paying back your loan and making sure one meets the requirements for PR when the time comes), is further colored by gray zones that are the result of multiple interpretations.
of rules and regulations. The historical overview as it was presented in this chapter is particularly useful for understanding the wider context in which these developments have taken shape. It basically shows that overseas education is no longer just about studying abroad, and, in fact, it probably never was. This, then, not only creates space to further examine aspects of overseas students’ lives in this context but also questions whether our understanding of migrants has been too limited. What about the other identities/roles a migrant can have? The case of Indian students shows that people with strong migration plans may never appear as migrants in the statistics since they enter a country under an entirely different category. The consequences this has for the way we understand the realms of migration and transnationalism will become clearer in the following chapter.