International Students in New Zealand – Responses and barriers to intercultural interaction opportunities

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Abstract

Recent research (Ward et Al 2005) has highlighted the limited interaction between international and New Zealand students in the campus context and also between international students and the wider New Zealand community.

This paper considers barriers and bridges to developing effective intercultural interaction involving international students in the New Zealand Campus and community contexts. Some of what works and what doesn't work are identified and recommendations are made to enhance the development of intercultural interaction. Particular attention is paid to the underlying issues behind the need of building interaction and what systemic changes would help to enhance intercultural interaction.. Questions are asked concerning the information New Zealand provides to prospective international students relating to intercultural friendships and interactions and the capacity of the campus and communities to deliver on expectations engendered from that information. Information derived from Focus groups amongst international students, interviews with international support staff and recent research is used to provide information around what works to enhance intercultural interaction and what acts as barriers to it. From this inference is drawn as to the need to implement systemic, local and personal changes within New Zealand to further enhance the capacity for good intercultural interaction that utilises international students as participants in it.

Key Words

Intercultural interaction, International students

Executive Summary

This paper is a discussion that draws from the sources of some field research, the research of others and our own experiences in this field. In writing this document, two questions underpinned it and focussed our thinking:

What works to enhance effective intercultural interaction for international students?
What acts as a barrier to effective intercultural interaction involving international students?

These two questions were directed to international student advisers, and in focus groups amongst international students. The answers to these questions point to several things that need attention:

Internationalisation of the curriculum in the context of education in New Zealand

Specific programmes and events designed to intervene and provide a context to enhance intercultural interaction.

Programmes and training designed to increase New Zealanders' knowledge of other cultures; intercultural skills; and programmes to assist new international students with intercultural interaction.

Attention to coordination of effort between institution, community and providers of intercultural training to achieve the above.

Along the way through this paper, a number of specific ideas and issues are raised. Most of these fall into the category of either something that contributes to building bridges to enhance intercultural interaction for international students in New Zealand or a barrier to it. It is noted that intercultural interaction is a two way process. The role domestic students and the wider community can play in either erecting barriers or building bridges to intercultural interaction begs the question of what level of change is needed within New Zealand.

What is apparent in the presentation of the analysis of focus groups and interviews is that things can be done at interpersonal, local and national levels to enhance intercultural interaction and intercultural awareness and skill for both New Zealanders and international students studying here. International students also provide us with an excellent resource in regard to opportunity to develop intercultural interaction skills and abilities.

Throughout the paper, examples and ideas are suggested. The background to the lack of opportunities for intercultural interaction for international students can be seen in New Zealand's under-preparedness for large numbers of culturally distinctive young people flooding into the country at a time when immigration policy changes had also stretched preparedness and skill base for working amongst culturally diverse and distinct peoples. The need for New Zealand to increase its capacity to absorb large numbers of students and provide a good environment for them during their time of study are the overriding conclusions drawn from looking at the needs around intercultural interaction involving international students, domestic students and the communities in which they live.

Introduction

Responding to opportunities for intercultural interaction can be very simple. Prior to writing this paper the authors were involved in a delightful event that naturally encouraged intercultural interactions amongst our students. The students invited us to join them in ushering a big rugby match. The ushering teams were made up of both Kiwi and international students in about a 50/50 proportion. Spending several hours together in clusters around the rugby stadium and working with the rugby following public is an experience that would come natural to many New Zealanders. However, to students from China, Vietnam, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, East Timor and USA just to name a few, it is a unique experience. Sharing it alongside "Kiwi" students and other international students adds different dimensions of reward other than the "fundraising" that comes from it.

The spin off in terms of intercultural interaction was enormous with friendships formed in the cauldron of a rugby crowd and long conversations while awaiting the arrival of the crowd. Interaction with the public gave a variety of presentations, from the friendly to the boorish for a multitude of times throughout the night. Amazingly, rugby followers at the game regard international students as "alright". After all they are helping at the game and even the over friendly or tipsy ones do not seem that intimidating. Several international students on the night and in subsequent days, commented how the experience had made them more confident in relating to New Zealanders as well as giving them insight into a slice of New Zealand life. They felt the experience made them relate and overcome their own hesitations and correspondingly they found most of the New Zealanders they related to responded positively towards them. When the game was over, as the Stadium and Rugby Union thanked the helpers with beer, fruit juice and pizza as an additional bonus for their work there was a noticeable buzz amongst the students. The mixing and relating that had developed throughout the event became obvious during the arranging of transport back to homes and the swapping of phone numbers to meet again or invites to social occasions. The mixing of international and domestic students in teams to do the ushering job appeared to effectively assist in breaking barriers to relating and to assist further mixing of an informal nature.

Events as described above are natural opportunities to build intercultural interaction. Alas! Such opportunities are not common in international student experience today compared to when international student numbers were small[1]. Perhaps the opportunities for such interaction are limited and there are not enough to share around. Perhaps it is due in part to the lack of attention being given to encouraging intercultural interaction experiences. This paper looks at the question of how to encourage international students in intercultural interaction and considers barriers and bridges to developing effective interaction involving international students in the New Zealand campus and community contexts. Material for this paper is drawn from a number of sources including focus groups and interviews amongst international students and support staff; case studies of programmes; and research by others. All information has been collected in the period between 2002 and 2006. The material from these sources has been analysed and forms the basis of presentation in this paper.

Background – Numbers and cultural diversity

International student numbers Ministry of Education (2006) in New Zealand have risen rapidly through the late 1990s to a peak of 127,000 in 2002 (Table 1).

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[1] Pre 1989 international students were restricted in number and country of origin. In 1989 the Education act was amended to allow educational institutions to recruit international students on a full fee paying basis from all over the world

Table 1: Total international enrolments by provider groups	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Schools	7,191	10,555	15,259	17,448	14,477	11,984
Public Tertiary Education Institutions	13,326	20,405	30,714	39,009	43,047	40,706
Private Tertiary Education Organisations	3,306	6,345	9,443	10,475	9,876	5,807
English Language Schools*	26,203	41,725	71,503	50,689	43,417	35,749
Totals	50,026	79,030	126,919	117,621	110,817	94,246

Sources: Schools data is as at 1 July, 2000 to 2005 (Ministry of Education roll returns).

And while Table 1 indicates a decline in numbers has occurred in recent times, both numbers and diversity have remained high at well above 2001 levels and there are indications McGraw (2006) that numbers and market share are again slowly rising. Market focus is away from dependence on the China market for numbers to newer markets such as the Middle East, and India and to tap the study abroad markets of North America and Europe more. The rapid growth over the last ten years in international student numbers has created a situation unique in New Zealand's experience. Figure 1 shows the steepness of this growth and the issues related to it are not insignificant. For example, consider the change in numbers from 2000 to 2003. In a three year space of time, the numerical equivalent of a city the size of Palmerston North or 2% of population was added to New Zealand and whilst spread over several centres in the country, the need for provision of infrastructure is not insignificant.

Figure 1: Foreign Fee-Paying Students in New Zealand, July 1999 –July 2004
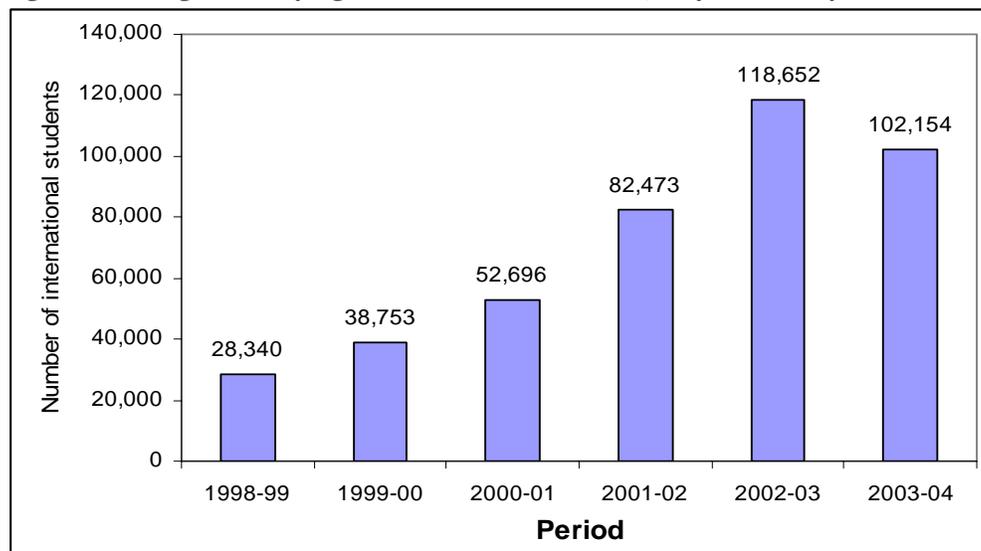
Source Ministry of Education statistics 1999- 2005[2]

Unlike normal population growth, the bulk of the students coming to New Zealand are young adults with distinctive and different cultural backgrounds from New Zealand students and most New Zealand communities. A literal flood of young people coming into the country from diverse backgrounds and quite naturally experiencing cultural shock and many of the

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[2] Figures in Figure 1 and Table 1 differ due to different criteria in counting. Table 1 counts all enrolments within a year including students on visitors and working holiday visas whereas Figure 1 accounts for students on study permits.

attendant international student problems encountered during the shock phase (Figure 2). Support for these students tended to be lacking simply because of the sheer numbers and the inexperience of many working with international students.

Figure 2; Top 8 Problems International Students Say They Experience In the "Shock Phase" Church (1982)

Homesickness	Mobility – difficulty getting around
Food differences	Language difficulties
Finding a place to live	Financial problems
Adjustments- new educational system and local customs	
Unfriendliness of community and fear of violence/racism	
Difficulty maintaining cultural & religious customs	

A Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students introduced in March 2002 was designed to ensure minimum standards in all aspects of an international student's journey to and through education in New Zealand. During 2002, 2003 and 2004 there followed initiatives in regard to professional development of staff working in international education especially around code responsibilities and best practice; research into international students' needs and issues; and development of the infrastructure in support of the export industry. A levy was imposed by government on education institutions and used to fund the Code activity, research, quality assurance, professional development and marketing.

Alongside of these changes to immigration policies beginning in 1986 resulted in significant levels of immigration into the New Zealand community of people from culturally diverse backgrounds. Cities began experiencing challenges to the way they delivered services as peoples of markedly different background presented new challenges to engagement in the wider community. Many of the new migrants as part of strategies to obtain work and to integrate into New Zealand added to the mix of diverse ethnicities in the education scene. Table 2 focuses on the Asian group of migrants. This effect on the cultural diversity of the population largely occurred since the changes in immigration that began in 1986.

Changes to the fabric of society have presented unique challenges especially to social service, local government and voluntary sector agencies. For an in depth discussion of the changes and the challenges they present for New Zealand see McGrath, Butcher, Pickering & Smith (2005).

Table 2: Asian proportion of the population of New Zealand cities, 2001 Census[3]

City	Asian proportion of city

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[3] Derived from the 2001 Census of Population and Dwellings, www.stats.govt.nz/census/default.htm [accessed 19 July 2005]. Also see 2001 Census Snapshot 15 (Asian People) - Media Release (2002), www2.stats.govt.nz/domino/external/pasfull/pasfull.nsf/web/Media+Release+2001+Census+Snapshot+15+Asian+People [accessed 19 July 2005].

	population (%)
North Shore	12.0
Waitakere	9.8
Auckland	17.3
Manukau	13.6
Hamilton	6.6
Napier	2.3
Palmerston North	5.7
Porirua	3.4
Upper Hutt	3.2
Lower Hutt	6.4
Wellington	10.1
Nelson	2.0
Christchurch	5.4
Dunedin	3.8

Background – Cultural adjustment

Chief amongst the challenges has been to understand the importance of enabling new migrants and international students to engage in the wider community in which they live. When someone comes to a new country and culture and intends staying for a significant period of time they will have to make cultural adjustments. For example, when an international student encounters a cultural incident involving someone in the host culture or for that matter from another culture different from their own they have a choice of two reaction paths Storti (1986)[4]. They can choose a path involving withdrawal and reflection with seeking input and help or withdrawal resulting in emotional and physical detachment with resulting isolation within their own particular cultural group.

Helping international students to engage with the host culture and choose help seeking inputs from the host culture is considered good for their cultural adjustment Klineberg & Hull (1979) and according to Storti (1986) results in successful cultural adjustment. Some of the principles underpinning the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students draw on this concept of engagement with the host culture as being important for the well being of international students and the means to a good education and living experience within New Zealand and contributory to enduring cross cultural and cross border linkages and friendships Scotts (2004). Good pastoral care that addresses intercultural engagement involving international students and New Zealanders is advised in the Guidelines to Support the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students Ministry of Education (2003) as it helps international students in adjusting to New Zealand by learning appropriate cultural responses and becoming more comfortable with the culture. The authors consider it critical to successful adjustment that the international student ideally have positive early experiences rather than negative ones. It is our belief, drawn from our experiences with international students, that if the early experiences are negative then the student is unlikely to engage in help seeking inputs to enable successful cultural adjustment. According to Storti (1986) delayed or impaired cultural adjustment results in isolation from the wider host culture and in our experience when this happens with international students they tend to see themselves as temporary sojourners and place less stock on successful adjustment.

Early positive experiences are important in our view, for the international student to avoid isolation or own cultural group context for adjustment. Opportunities for early positive

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[4] See Appendix 1 for a fuller explanation

intercultural experiences appear to be limited. Research Ward & Masgoret (2004), McGrath & Butcher (2004a) & (2004b) shows that international students come with high expectations of positive engagement experiences. Generally their Kiwi peers as well as the wider New Zealand community also desire more interaction Ward & CACR Associates (2005). However there is a lack of sufficient connections being made that produce sustainable positive experiences. The exceptions are a distinct minority. According to Ward & Masgoret (2004), the expectations of international students in cultural interaction especially around friendship are far from realised. This is in part due to lacks in positive interactions within the wider student body and community. Indications in more recent work Ward & CACR Associates (2005) bear this out. Information in this recent study also covers New Zealanders perceptions of international students and suggests there is a gap between international student perception of friendliness and how New Zealanders perceive they are doing in that regard. Additionally this study showed a significant gap between how teachers perceive they do in encouraging intercultural interaction in their classrooms and how both domestic and international students rate their effectiveness in doing so. New Zealanders, according to this study, tend to assume they do fairly well in relating to international students whereas the reality is that most New Zealanders don't tend to engage with international students at more than superficial levels.

The lack of opportunity to engage with the community and with local students contributes to this gap. An application of the findings of the work of Colleen Ward and her colleagues is in the area of enhancing intercultural interaction.

For the remainder of this paper, the question of how intercultural interaction can be enhanced for international students is looked at firstly to identify barriers to it occurring and secondly to look at what is works and how intercultural interaction can be further enhanced.

Methodology

Two questions designed to elicit information on what constitutes effective intercultural interaction for international students were asked in a range of contexts. The questions were:

> What works to enhance effective intercultural interaction for international students?

> What acts as a barrier to effective intercultural interaction involving international students?

These questions were asked in focus groups amongst international students and of international student support staff and advisers by way of one to one interviews and in group contexts in professional development workshops. The focus groups, interviews and workshop groups were conducted for wider purposes than these two questions related to intercultural interaction.

The information from these sources was analysed and discussed.

Analysis of Focus Groups

Focus Group demographics

94 international students participated in focus groups[5]. All but three students were from Asia. The three non Asian students were from Australia, USA and Germany. Of the remaining 91, 67 were from China, 2 from Korea, 7 from Japan, 5 from Malaysia, 1 from East Timor, 2 from the Philippines, 2 from Vietnam, 4 from Taiwan and 1 unknown. No Pacific Island, Middle East, African or South American students were involved in focus groups. By way of comparison Figure 3 is indicative of region of origin proportions.

Figure 3 –Regions of Origin International Students in New Zealand -2004
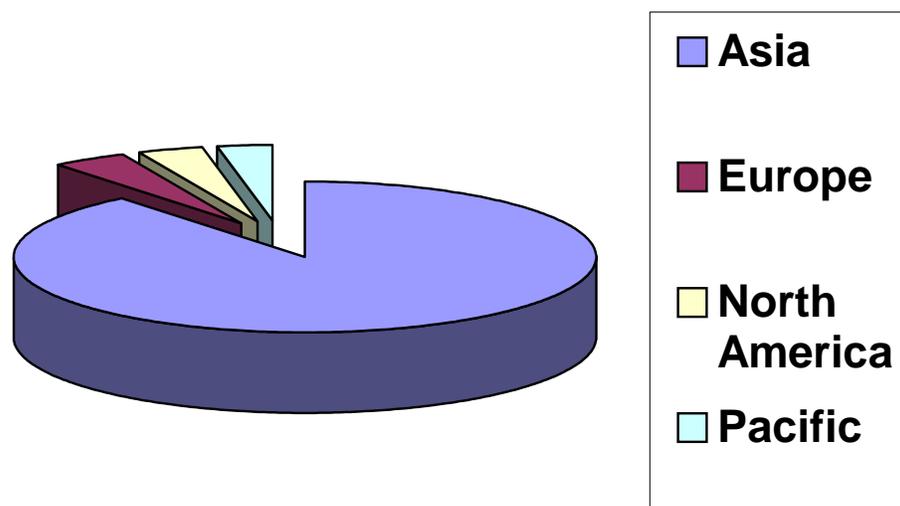
Source Ministry of Education   Statistics - Enrolments of International students by Region

 It should be noted approximately two thirds of Asian students were from China. Apart from the lack of Pacific Islanders the sample is generally representative of the international student body.   Further demographic details relating to the sample of students in the focus groups are presented in Table 2 and Figure 4. Key items to note are that these students are young and recent arrivals to New Zealand.

Postgraduate international students, trained as focus groups leaders convened each group. The focus groups met only once. The focus group were conducted in April & May 2004 (5) and in March & April 2006 (14). These focus groups were conducted as part of other research projects, namely "*Campus Community Linkages*", McGrath & Butcher (2004) and "*The evaluation of the Chinese Guide to Studying and Living in New Zealand*" McGrath & Pickering (2006). The questions of intercultural interaction were addressed in the context of a wider range of research questions. An analysis of the information derived from these focus groups has been done by asking how that information answers the two questions in this study.

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[5] Several senior international students also participated but as focus group leaders. Several groups were conducted in Chinese and all other groups being mixed in respect of origins were conducted in English

Table 2 - Age, Gender, Study and Location Focus Group Participants

Age Range	16-27 years (+50%: 20-22 years)
Male/Female	**48 Male** **46 Female**
Area of Study: o **English Language** o **Diploma** o **Undergraduate Degree** o **Foundations Studies** o **Post Graduate**	 **12** **4** **57** **18** **3**
Location of Focus Groups o **Auckland** o **Hamilton** o **Palmerston North** o **Wellington** o **Christchurch**	 **6** **2** **4** **4** **3**

Figure 4 - Timing of Arrival in New Zealand of Focus Group Participants
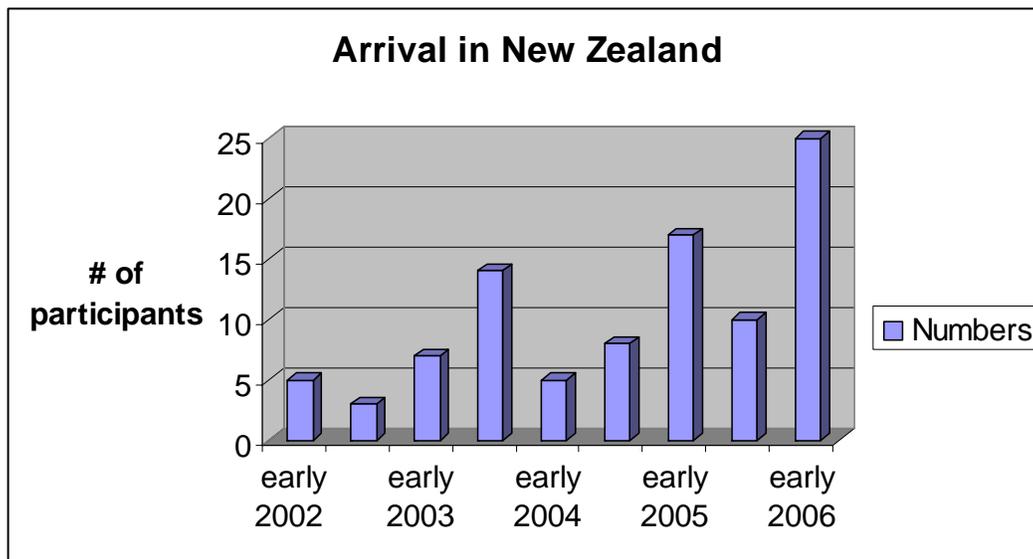
Summary of Responses

Focus Group responses are summarised in Table 3 with common responses in bold.

Question 1: What works to enhance effective intercultural interaction for international students?

Question 2: What acts as a barrier to effective intercultural interaction involving international students?

Table 3 – Focus Group Responses to Questions 1 and 2

Question 1	Question 2
Someone saying hello and smiling.	Rude airport people/service personnel/bank.
People being friendly.	**Discrimination in service.**
Orientation games for mixing.	Racist remarks.
Going to church/religious group.	**Language that's hard to understand.**
Playing sport (soccer, badminton...).	Being told off for not queuing.
People speaking clearly.	Unhygienic behaviour (hanky, hand washing).
People offering to help.	Ignoring international student.
Be invited to events in town.	Loud people – loud voices.
Tramping.	Throwing of eggs at student.
Dancing.	Kiwi Orientation party - feeling unsafe.
Good starting in high school – make friends.	Tiredness.
How to make friends in Kiwi land.	Internationals only in hostel.
"Newswatch" & "Inside Out".[6]	Letters in paper – rude to Chinese.
My mentor.	Inappropriate sexual advance.
Group assignment.	Smelly person.
Flatting with Kiwis.	People look unfriendly.
Sitting next to people on the bus.	
Festival for cultures/culture night.	
Homestay parent/sibling.	

Some additional information that relates to these questions came out in several focus groups. In particular it was noted that many international students felt lonely and missed family quite early in their experience here. Some felt the feelings related to missing home contributed to them having a harder time in relating well when needing to relate inter-culturally. They reported feeling tired and sometimes depressed and some felt the barrier they found in intercultural interaction was within, as they felt it was hard to always feel inferior or rejected or ignored when trying to relate. Some commented that getting over being homesick helped them to be able to relate better.

Several identified a friendship as being important in getting over being homesick. Most found good friends amongst co-nationals and several had friends amongst Kiwis and other international students. Friendship with other international students and Kiwis most often came from doing things together. Study, accommodation and extra curricular activities featured most as the context in which intercultural communication occurred generally in an informal mode because they chose to be together.

Participants in focus groups were generally of the opinion that most new Zealand people were a little bit unfriendly or do not initiate friendship. 7 focus groups recorded comments about it being the responsibility of the international student to initiate the intercultural interaction but many felt it hard to do so as they simply did not feel they had skills to even start out. Most participants in focus groups felt that their early interaction was hampered by a simple lack of pre arrival information about how to relate and/or a lack in instruction on arrival. Some felt orientation was a waste of time as it focussed on information rather than activity using the information. For example, being told about slang words was good but until you experienced the use of them in a real context it had little meaning.

Overall several general themes emerged from the focus groups:

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[6] See Appendix 2‑1 for information on Newswatch and Inside Out

1. Early experiences are often a key in influencing later patterns of involvement in intercultural activity.
2. Language is important.
3. Anti social behaviour stifles intercultural interaction.
4. Natural contexts for relating aid intercultural interaction.
5. Extra curricular activity, community and sports groups are helpful.

Analysis of Interviews

Seven interviews were carried out with experienced international student support personnel working in Auckland (2), Wellington (2), Palmerston North (2), Christchurch (1). All responses are recorded once and those responses identified by a 4 or more support staff are in bold for emphasis and are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4 - Interview Responses to Questions 1 and 2

Question 1	Question 2
Flexibility to relate to diversity.	Unfamiliarity with new, e.g., mid east.
Learning languages and **culture.**	Lacks in knowledge/outlook of internationals.
Being receptive to unusual things like food, language, performance.	Some don't want friendship preferring co-nationals.
Internships related to course.	Treating every one the same.
Mentoring programmes – peer and course mentoring.	**NZers often don't know how to make the first step** – slow and shy.
Community Friendship programmes – Op Friendship, flatting friends, Kiwi link.	Kiwis who mix looked down on.
Sports and cultural clubs.	Culturally biased /disrespectful.
Good role models - provide awards and incentives.	Lack of time for key support personnel.
Interaction for credit.	
Post grad/mature students family link programmes with community.	
Get domestic students to organise events.	
Internationalise the curriculum to enhance interaction.	
ExcelL programmes, etc.[7]	

Interviewees showed a stronger predisposition towards internationalisation aspects for encouraging intercultural interaction. Each adviser interviewed showed very good understanding of the issues and indicated the importance of integrated approaches to the problem from within educational institutions especially those of size. The view that providing significant intercultural interaction of a positive nature for the international student body is important for study success, health and a general positive view of international education in New Zealand. The importance, to those interviewed in international support roles, of volunteers from the student body and the community in welcoming and integrating new international students was mentioned several times and in different ways. Administrative requirements and full work loads were mentioned as hampering support staff in initiating and encouraging programmes to enhance intercultural interaction.

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[7] See Appendix 21 forro information on ExcelL

In addition to the above interviews, advisers in professional development settings offered the following information from group work around the questions of enhancing intercultural interaction. This information is summarised in Table 5.

Table 5 – Responses from International Student Advisers in Group Work in a Professional- Development Workshop ~~and Group Work~~.

Question 1	Question 2
Empowering students to work in culturally diverse situations.	Lack of understanding of the value and importance.
Be directive early on to encourage students over the interaction first hurdle.	Rudeness.
Interview students – provides interaction.	**Language skills lacking/accent.**
Mentor programmes.	Concealment of information to help.
Credit for interacting – some PG programmes.	Individualism.
Get domestic students to help in events and trips.	Differences in thinking and behaviours.
Use mixed group work in course but construct work to enhance each students contribution.	Power being used wrongly.
Have students celebrate culturally diversity.	
Providing a context where intercultural interaction is successful.	

Several general themes emerged from these interviews and group discussions:

1. Knowledge of cultures and flexible approaches are needed for enhancing intercultural activity.
2. Language is important.
3. New Zealanders need help in gaining intercultural skills.
4. Tried and proven programmes need documentation and promulgation for use.
5. Providing incentives such as credit for courses, or part of a course or internships can help.
6. Emphasis the value of natural contexts to aid intercultural interaction.
7. Groups outside the mainstream of the educational institution such as community and sports groups are helpful.
8. Using domestic students and programmes to empower all students for intercultural relating is seen as important.

The negative side of the question identified how limited the advisers group regards the majority of New Zealanders when it comes to intercultural relating. This highlights a need within campuses and community that is increasingly seen as a need for New Zealand as a whole. There is a need to build abilities to relate well across a wide range of cultures and languages. This may need to be addressed in widespread curriculum change in our national education setup and also at the tertiary level where training for internationalisation is an important theme for discussion Ministry of Education (2006b). With the world coming to us, so to speak, we are exposed to our lacks in relating. The negative side of intercultural relating as identified by advisers indicates a general lack of knowledge and skill in relating across cultures.

Discussion

In the report on "*The Experiences of International Students in New Zealand*" Ward & Masgoret (2004) it was noted that international students had limited intercultural and intracultural contact with New Zealanders and especially domestic students. In this work we have sought to look for bridges to intercultural interaction and to identify what the barriers are.

Focus groups amongst international students and the observations of international student support personnel have been used to attempt answers to the questions:

–What works to enhance effective intercultural interaction for international students?

–What acts as a barrier to effective intercultural interaction involving international students?

What works is a combination of things ideally used in a coordinated way:

Programmes that create a context for relating such as events organised that deliberately encourage intercultural interaction or naturally occurring events that have that opportunity within.

People with good intercultural skills, functioning as role models and initiators leading others such as domestic students and community volunteers to engage interculturally.

Provide training in intercultural relating and interaction for New Zealanders and international students.

Identify and place kiwis and international students in contexts in which intercultural interaction can occur naturally such as accommodation, sport, affinity and interest groups

The barriers to effective intercultural interaction include:

Language: The lack of English language skill amongst many new international students and the lack of skill in other languages amongst New Zealanders.

New Zealanders lacking in intercultural skills and projection of less than friendly demeanours.

Large sub cultural groupings on many campuses can serve to limit the need to interact on the part of many international students.

These findings will not be new to some observers. If New Zealand is to achieve good levels of intercultural interaction between international students and domestic students and between the community and international students then more action is needed to overcome barriers and to reduce the gaps between expectation and experience. Several approaches are needed to provide solutions to the lack of good intercultural interaction. Solutions need to be found and acted upon at three distinct levels:.

Level one is the interpersonal level and is about individuals improving their ability to interact inter-culturally. Ward & CACR Associates (2006) identified a significant desire on the part of domestic students and community people to have more interaction with international students. This matches the desire of international students identified in earlier studies, Ward & Masgoret (2004), McGrath & Butcher (2004). There is a need for help to be provided at an individual level to enable inertia to be overcome where opportunities exist for intercultural interaction. "Desire accomplished is sweet to the soul. So providing help by way of skills and incentives for relating inter-culturally would be positive and satisfying for all concerned.

Level two would be at the local level of a campus and a community and has to do with coordinated policies and programmes to enhance intercultural interaction. The people responsible for implementing Cultural diversity and support policies in education institutions and local bodies need to explore ways they can together enhance intercultural interaction for international students, domestic students and the community. Research, Butcher & McGrath (2005), Butcher, Lim, McGrath & Revis (2002), Holmes (2000), Howarth (2006), McGrath & Butcher (2004a) and Ward & CACR Associates (2006) for example highlight the need for coordination and programmes at the campus and local community level.

Level three would be on a national and systemic basis and has to do with bringing about social change. Concepts of social cohesion and engagement need to inform policy and change in such areas as the national education curriculum to enhance intercultural interaction. Examples for inclusion that could help are encouraging learning other languages, study abroad requirements for degrees and diplomas, learning about and in other cultures. There is a need to provide incentives, training and enhancing of career paths for those who can improve New Zealand's collective ability to relate inter-culturally and to enhance international student ability to do the same. The recent report, "Internationalisation in New Zealand Tertiary Education Organisations" (Ministry of Education, 2006) touches on this need in its recommendations relating to future policy initiatives.

Responding to opportunities for intercultural interaction whenever they occur is ideal. International students are on our doorstep and are a resource for enhancing New Zealanders' ability to interact inter-culturally. That this resource is not being used effectively is obvious in the facts related to the limited intercultural interaction and friendship that a majority of international students experience. The lack of ability or will within our education institutions to enhance interactions is in part not seeing the problem, or seeing it as an international student problem and not one which is a New Zealand problem.

International students have caused this problem by coming here but without them coming here New Zealanders would be less aware of their lacks in regards to intercultural interaction. They present both an opportunity and a problem. Taking the opportunity to enhance and improve intercultural interaction can be of benefit to both international students and New Zealanders at the same time. A win–win outcome is possible. Failure in this will continue to send international graduates from our shores having had a less than ideal experience of New Zealanders and probably a predisposition to not engage much further with New Zealand over their lifetime. Failure will also increase New Zealand and New Zealanders' lack of engagement in the wider world. This will seriously compromise achieving the key objectives recently outlined by the New Zealand government for the International Education Industry[8] especially those that involve enriching international student experience in New Zealand and equipping New Zealand students to thrive in an inter-connected world.

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[8] Hon Dr Michaels Cullen keynote address to ISANA NZ conference, August 31st 2006

Working on some of the ideas on what works to enhance intercultural interaction could be a starting point. Even taking and exploring a new idea or best practice example in ones own context would be helpful. Looking to ways of breaking down barriers, even the very simple ones of encouraging everyone to take the initiative to say "hello" and smile would be a start. Working to change policy and to implement systemic change would take longer and is a need for those best placed to do it.

Ward (2001) says that "*Research has shown that the presence of international students, even in large numbers, is insufficient in itself to promote intercultural interactions, to develop intercultural friendships and to result in international understanding. Rather, situations must be structured to foster these processes. Studies have also revealed that students, both local and international, perceive it is the responsibility of educational institutions to increase and enhance intercultural interactions.*" In these last five years the growth in international student numbers alone has done little to enhance intercultural interaction but it has created a greater opportunity for more people to engage. That the engagement is limited and there remains a gap between desire to interact and actual reality in interaction indicates the need for a more structured approach to the issue. Education institutions and local communities need to work together to provide the structure to foster the processes that remove barriers and build bridges to intercultural interaction.

Conclusion

Rapid growth in numbers of international students coming to New Zealand and increased diversity created a situation unfamiliar to New Zealand education institutions and the wider community. Almost overnight, large numbers of young people arrived in New Zealand from backgrounds culturally distinctive from New Zealand. This cultural diversity and distinctiveness and the sheer weight of numbers presented challenges to those concerned with social cohesion. Coupled with this was a high expectation amongst the arriving students of being able to develop friendships with New Zealanders. The result was a need to enhance intercultural interaction amongst the student body and within the wider community. Allowing this to happen informally as it had happened in the past was not enough. It became important for educational institutions and communities to address the need for good intercultural interaction.

In this paper, what works and what does not work in intercultural interaction has been explored. An analysis has been done of information arising from focus groups of international students and input from people very close to this issue, international student support staff. Research of others has also helped to inform. What is apparent to the authors for enhancing intercultural interaction is four things:

> Internationalise the curriculum in a New Zealand education context. to catalyse greater inter-cultural engagement

> Specific programmes and events designed to intervene and provide a context to enhance intercultural interaction.

> Programmes and training designed to increase New Zealanders' knowledge of other cultures; intercultural skills; and programmes to assist new international students with intercultural interaction.

> Attention to coordination of effort between institution, community and providers of intercultural training to achieve the above.

While this may not seem new to many overseas observers it is only recently New Zealand has had large numbers of people culturally distinct from us coming to live and study here. We may have desires to interact with and get to know them but a simple reality is frequently we don't know how. The barriers to intercultural interaction with international students are frequently within us and within our context as we have not thought about how we would achieve the desirable outcome of good intercultural interaction. More thought and effort needs to go into this at interpersonal, campus and community levels as well as from a national viewpoint to enhance our place and connection in the global society. Starting with our interactions with international students is a good place for improvement and will help build the place for our children in this world.

> *"Ko te piko o te Mahuri, tera te tipu o te rakau"*
> *The way the seedling is nurtured determines what kind of tree it becomes.*
> *The way we nurture our children determines how they become as adults.*

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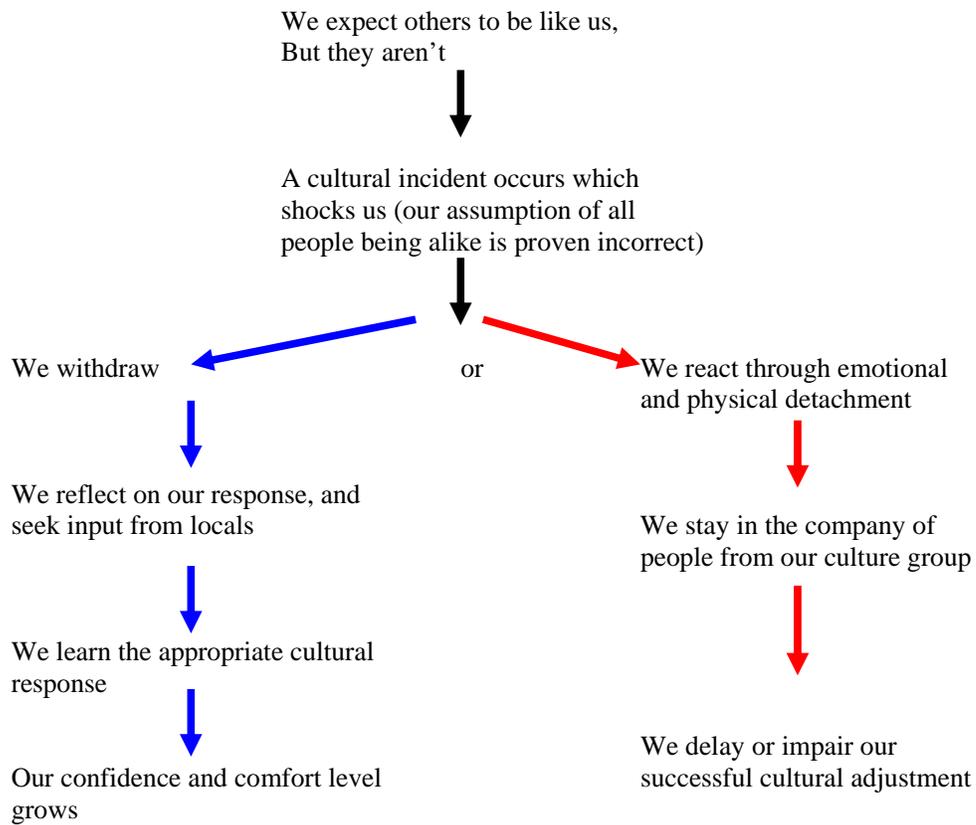
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Appendix 1

The Anatomy of Cultural Adjustment
What happens when we enter a new culture?

We expect others to be like us,
But they aren't

A cultural incident occurs which
shocks us (our assumption of all
people being alike is proven incorrect)

We withdraw   or   We react through emotional
                                                     and physical detachment

We reflect on our response, and
seek input from locals

                                                     We stay in the company of
                                                     people from our culture group

We learn the appropriate cultural
response

                                                     We delay or impair our
                                                     successful cultural adjustment

Our confidence and comfort level
grows

Adapted from Storti (1986), *The Art of Crossing Cultures*. Intercultural Press

Appendix 2

Brief descriptions of 3 programmes identified as valuable for intercultural interaction and considered by the authors as worthy of being used more widely :

Newswatch: Is a programme designed to aid intercultural interaction and assist students in developing language and social skills. It began after migrants, Rey & Lisa Enriquez found themselves interacting with international students at Victoria University of Wellington and engaging in discussion around the TV news and realising they were helping the students to develop their understanding of English and world and New Zealand events. This was refined with the help of David Newton and the Victoria Chaplaincy who provided a suitable meeting space. The resulting programme involves domestic students, local community people and international students mainly from language and foundation studies programmes. It's very simple – the evening news is recorded and 3 or 4 segments chosen for discussion. The next day students come after class and share a drink and refreshments together with domestic student and community volunteers. The news is watched together then a domestic student leads an initial discussion session before the large group breaks up into small groups. The groups then come back together and share their discovery and analysis on the news and raise questions. The news is reviewed and difficult concepts in language, culture of New Zealand or even world events and world view predisposition in the media are discussed. Sometimes the leader has prepared participation exercise to understand key things related to New Zealand such as understanding Rugby by having students pack down a scrum or organise a lineout. The time together is purposeful, friendly and fun. Friendships with domestic students and community helpers lead to natural relating outside of Newswatch and the international students gain confidence. This programme whilst not part of Foundation and language studies is a useful weekly adjunct and outlet for students that helps them engage in the wider community and the University prior to entry as degree students.

Inside Out: Was a programme funded under the Education Levy and designed to enhance international student interaction with the community. It employed organisers to access community programmes and to organise extracurricular events to facilitate involvement and interaction of international students.   The programme ran in Palmerston North and Christchurch but sadly was discontinued because funding was reduced for such programmes due to a perceived need to put more of levy monies into marketing. The Palmerston North Programme was successful in getting a range of international students involved in the wider community. A comment from Sarah Pettus, one of the organisers is well worth recording, "They (English language students) speak more in a two and half hour van ride than in class all week - they talk non stop on outings and events". This programme using events, trips, community occasions has a high element of interaction in it. It proved invaluable in building language interaction, confidence and a sense of well being. Students come out of their shell and become far easier to manage and their achievement goes up. The programme, funded by the international education levy was a cooperative programme between education institutions and Vision Manawatu. It was a good example of extracurricular activity being used to enhance the educational outcomes, as well as care of students and building their intercultural interaction abilities. Many of the students who took part in the programme continue to use the services of and are involved in community groups and clubs they sampled as part of the programme.

ExcelL: Is an example of a different programme. It focuses on teaching and developing skills for intercultural interaction. ExcelL provides systematic social effectiveness training to new international students in a four to six 2-3 hour sessions. Homework between sessions assists. ExcelL recognises potential psychosocial barriers that impede development of socio cultural competencies. Barriers such as limited corrective feedback or coaching opportunities; feeling overwhelmed by the multitude of adjustments needed for entry to a new culture; interpersonal anxieties in relating within the host culture; and threats to the personal identity of the newly

arrived international student. ExcelL focuses on behavioural outcomes and in so doing helps with early adjustment with its pragmatic, practical approach that facilitate student success in their intercultural interactions. ExcelL programmes run in education institutions report high levels of success with the students that get involved. The Centre for Cross Cultural research at Victoria University of Wellington arranges training programmes annually for ExcelL facilitators. ExcelL programmes are bound by standards and can only be conducted with trained facilitators. The quality that is derived from this approach ensures good results for most programmes undertaken on behalf on students.

These three high value programmes were identified as examples of three different interventions to assist intercultural interaction. The first Newswatch runs entirely on volunteers. The second Inside Out involved paying a community coordinator to organise events and programmes to make use of the resource of the community. The third ExcelL is a high quality intervention from the education institution to enhance the skills of its international students in regard to their interaction within the Campus and community context.