

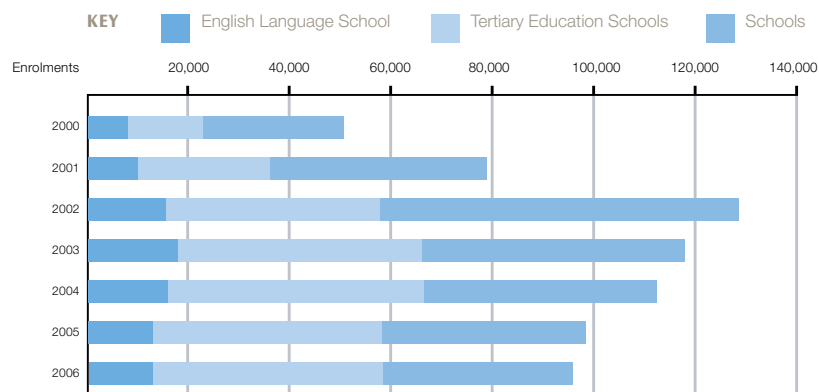
introduction and background



International education has been a major growth industry globally over the past 30 years. Since 1995, the total number of international students has almost doubled and has reached 2.7 million globally (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2006; Australian Education International (AEI), 2005).

Education is an increasingly important component of New Zealand international relations throughout the world. The sector generates revenue of more than \$2 billion annually for New Zealand's businesses, communities and education institutions. In recent years, international education has become one of New Zealand's most successful export industries. In 2006 total enrolments of international students were 93,421 and although this reflects a 26% decline from the peak enrolment numbers experienced in 2002 (126,919)¹, demand for the New Zealand education experience remains strong. Interim 2007 enrolment data indicates that overall there has been a levelling off of enrolments, with increases recorded in the secondary school (+37%) and English Language School sectors (+3%), and declines in the tertiary (-11%) and Private Training Establishment (-11%) sectors.

F 1.0
FIGURE 1.0
INTERNATIONAL ENROLMENTS IN NEW ZEALAND



The number of international students studying in New Zealand has fluctuated in response to various external factors. For example, enrolments fell sharply during the Asian economic crisis of 1997 – 1999 and surged dramatically in 2002. Many factors including changes in Chinese government policy have subsequently seen numbers decline. This variability emphasises the need for New Zealand to diversify source countries, and to balance its heavy reliance on onshore delivery – that is, students coming to New Zealand – with investment in other modes of delivery². It also suggests there is an on-going need to monitor and improve the quality of educational and pastoral care provision.

At its best, the New Zealand education system is world class: New Zealand 15-year-olds rank among the top in the world as measured by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and more than half of the country's universities are in the world's top 500 in the Times Higher Education Supplement rankings. From an international education standpoint, a recent i-Graduate research survey focusing specifically on New Zealand universities reported that New Zealand's higher education is, when compared to other international institutions, perceived to be world class (Archer, 2007).

1 Sources: 2000–2002: School July roll returns, TEI and PTE full-year SDR data, and Statistics New Zealand Survey of English Language Providers. 2003–2006: Ministry of Education Export Education Levy database.

2 The International Education Agenda: A Strategy for 2007 – 2012, The New Zealand Government, August 2007.

To ensure that New Zealand retains its ability to attract international students from a wide variety of international locations, it is important that it continues to develop an integrated, sustainable and forward-thinking approach to international education. A critical aspect to achieving this is the continual monitoring of international student experiences and levels of satisfaction, alongside their overall characteristics.

The National Survey of International Students provides the New Zealand Ministry of Education and the Department of Labour with valuable information on the international students' educational and work experiences, levels of satisfaction, academic progress and overall demographic and personal characteristics. The survey also assists providers to develop/refine their policies and practices to further enhance international students' experience of living and studying in New Zealand.

The research report outlines the development of the National Survey of International Students, the sampling procedures adopted for the 2007 research, the major research findings discovered, and provides commentary on the differences between the 2003 and 2007 research results.

1.2

BACKGROUND

In 2007 the Ministry of Education independently contracted Deloitte to administer the National Survey of International Students. This research survey was previously conducted in 2003 and provided a range of information about the experiences of international students studying in New Zealand. The 2003 survey was originally administered as a response to New Zealand's growing presence in export education and more importantly the increasing need for information that will assist policy development and planning by the Ministry of Education and other sector agencies and governing bodies.

The major objectives of the research in 2003 were to:

- a) identify the general characteristics of international students in New Zealand;
- b) assess the perceived academic performance or success of international students;
- c) determine the satisfaction of international students with educational, pastoral and support services, living conditions and social circumstances; and
- d) ascertain the future plans of international students.

The intent in replicating the earlier survey is to further identify the experiences of international students. Furthermore, it provides the Ministry of Education with the opportunity to expand upon the data originally gathered and determine the extent to which events, activities, policies or practices impact on international students studying in New Zealand. It also assists the Department of Labour to identify trends in labour-related matters that impact upon international students.

In essence the National Survey of International Students is designed to act as a barometer of New Zealand's international student market, providing valuable feedback on students' satisfaction, experiences, thoughts and perspectives. International students are a vibrant part of New Zealand's education sector, providing immense benefit to New Zealand education providers, educators and domestic students alike. Their global perspective helps raise New Zealand education standards, and the people-to-people connections established are important for young people as they increasingly operate in a global marketplace. The information gathered from the National Survey of International Students assists education providers review their services and provision, which allows them to consider changes to better support international students in the future and improve the return on their investment in internationalisation.

SECTION 1 provides an introduction to the research, background to its development and purpose, and outlines the research report's structure.

SECTION 2 outlines the methodological approach adopted, providing detail on the survey population, questionnaire changes, the survey administration, the response rates achieved and the limitations associated with the research.

SECTION 3 provides a profile of the 2007 survey respondents. Items profiled include personal characteristics (e.g. age, gender and country of origin), and regional location.

The level of study and length of time students have been in New Zealand and at their educational institution is analysed, in addition to students' English proficiency and how they have financed their education in New Zealand and the level of difficulty associated with that.

SECTION 4 is divided into eight sub-sections.

4.2 Making a Choice About Where to Study

Examines if New Zealand was the international students' first choice as a place of study, why they chose New Zealand as a study destination and what other locations they would like to study in.

4.3 Living Arrangements in New Zealand

Examines current living arrangements, living costs and satisfaction with various aspects of these arrangements. It also includes specific questions about homestays, such as the characteristics of life in homestays, relationships with homestay families and the students' satisfaction with homestay accommodation.

4.4 Educational Experiences in New Zealand

Outlines the educational experiences of international students in New Zealand institutions and includes the self-assessment of academic progress and academic difficulties, an evaluation of programmes of study and an examination of perceived cultural inclusiveness in the learning environment.

4.5 Services & Facilities

Looks at students' evaluations of services and facilities, both the services provided by agents and the services and facilities in educational institutions. Service availability, quality and overall satisfaction are examined. Section 4.5 also explores whether international students perceive New Zealand education as good value for money and if students would recommend New Zealand as a study destination.

4.6 Support or Help That You Might Receive in New Zealand

Focuses on examining the availability and sources of social support to assist with both practical and emotional needs. This includes exploring students' satisfaction with the social support received.

4.7 Your Relationships with People in New Zealand

Examines various aspects of international students' relationships with people in New Zealand. It considers friendships with New Zealanders and contact with New Zealanders, compatriots and other international students. This section also includes measures of perceived discrimination and 'reflected perceptions', that is, how international students believe New Zealanders see them.

4.8 Life in New Zealand

Considers aspects of international students' life in New Zealand.

This includes their overall quality of life, the difficulties they may have experienced in New Zealand and the perceptions and evaluations of the students' town / city of location. This section also examines if students have opted to work while studying in New Zealand, what type of work they are doing and the average hours they are currently working.

4.9 Future Plans

Looks at students' future work and study plans. This includes questions about students' intentions to remain in New Zealand and to apply for permanent residency.

SECTION 5 provides a discussion on the research's key conclusions and implications.

SECTION 6 outlines recommendations for further research.