

Workshop 1 Reflection: Capitalising on Australia and India Education and Innovation Opportunities.

Dr Andrew Deuchar and Ben Apted



SPP, in partnership with the Australia India Institute (AII), Australia India Chamber of Commerce (AICC) and Australia India Youth Dialogue (AIYD) are hosting a three-part workshop series focusing on capitalising on Australia and India Education and Innovation Opportunities.

Ben Apted, Senior Partner at SPP and the convener and lead facilitator of the series would like to acknowledge Phil Noble, Michelle Goldsmith, Clara Yates and Bruce Bayley (leading the online education focus) for their contributions in facilitating the first workshop.

This three-part workshop series has been designed to understand more about opportunities in education and innovation between Australia and India. It brings together representatives from universities, industry and government to explore current and emerging trends in these sectors and to gather stakeholder feedback. This feedback will inform a white paper that outlines emerging opportunities and that proposes key actions that can be taken to harness them.

This interim report provides a summary of the first workshop in the series.

Workshop 1

The first workshop was held on Thursday 2 December 2021 and investigated three main themes:

- Student welfare and the wellbeing of international students
- The future of online learning
- Future opportunities for research collaborations

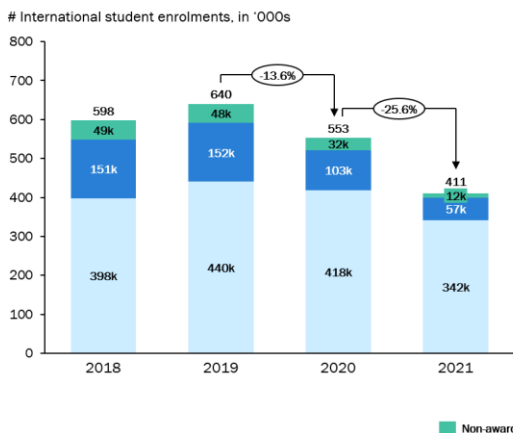
Experts in these fields were invited to discuss recent research and propose areas of discussion for stakeholders. After each expert reported on their research, stakeholders were organised into breakout rooms where a facilitator guided discussion. After twenty minutes of discussion, a representative from each group reported their key insights and responses back to all participants. In this way we generated a diverse and informed knowledge base that harnessed the knowledge and expertise of key stakeholders.

Below is an overview of each theme and a summary of stakeholder feedback.

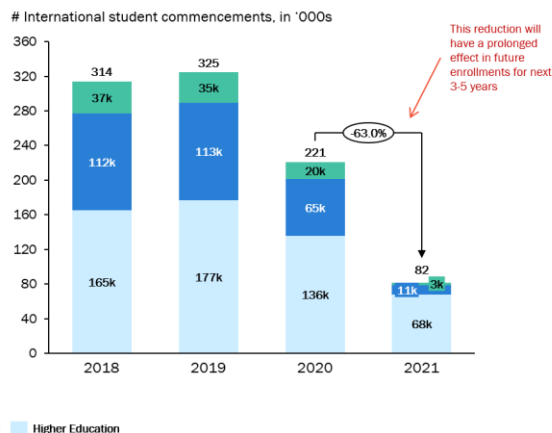
The pandemic has significantly inhibited mobility of international students, presenting significant challenges to the traditional on-shore delivery model

Exhibit 1: Austrade Enrolment and Commencement data (2021) - decline in international student commencements

Enrolments reduced by 26% in FY21, ELICOS most impacted, dropping by more than 62%



Commencement dropped by even greater at 63% with greater reduction in ELICOS courses



Theme 1: Student welfare and the wellbeing of international students

In this section of the workshop, Dr Andrew Deuchar from the Australia India Institute shared [findings of a report](#) he conducted about Indian international students in Australia. The report was commissioned by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment to investigate the reasons Indian students choose to study in Australia and their experiences when they arrived. He worked in partnership with Austrade and Group of Eight to shed new light on these themes.

The research consisted of in-depth interviews conducted online during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the main findings of his research was that Indian students who had strong social connections were much less likely to report hardships associated with their welfare. This was because Indian students developed critical ways of support one another. This included offering emotional and social support to each other, but also sharing important information through digital platforms about where to access resources.

Dr Deuchar argued that the key to enhancing Indian students' welfare in higher education was helping them build their social connections. With that in mind, he proposed three questions to generate discussion among the stakeholders.

1) How can practitioners and other stakeholders work together to build Indian students' social connections?

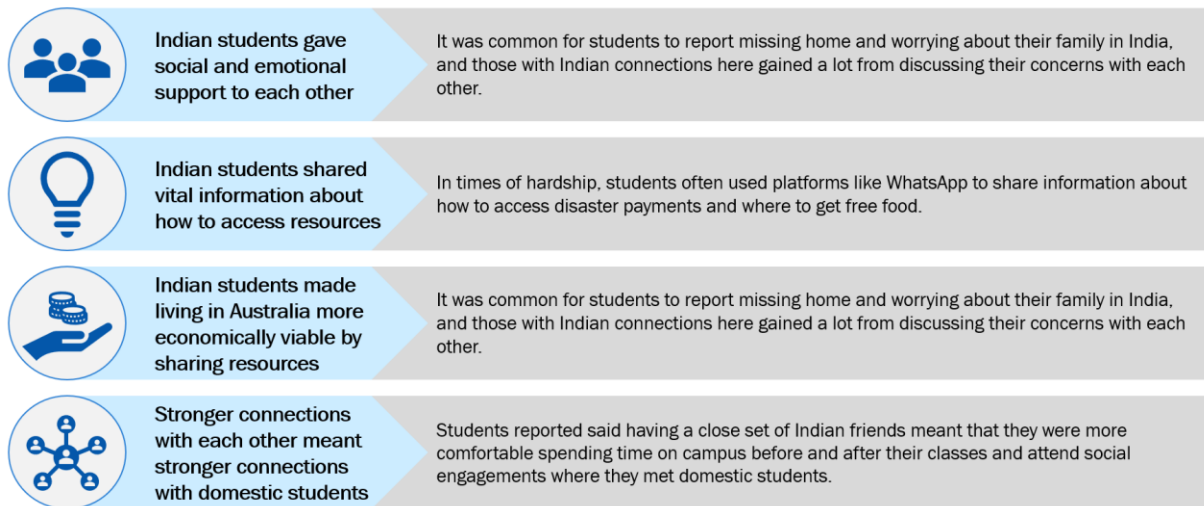
- 2) What interventions are already promoting Indian students' social connections and how successful are they?
- 3) How could these findings be drawn on to inform international student recruitment in India?

Key insights from stakeholders:

- There is a strong use of student clubs and associations (both discipline-specific and whole university) for social connections and to keep in touch with students off-shore however there are further opportunities to leverage community groups beyond university
- Strong focus on digital engagement via virtual support and mentorship however there are more opportunities to support students beyond employment/studies (e.g. integrating with society)
- Industry experience and innovation programs are provided to help students with a simultaneous focus on social connection – it is important to include international students in these
- Workshops and activities are being run to engage and help prospective students be comfortable coming to Australia to study
- There is strong virtual fatigue as students keep working digitally. In person, COVID safe events and initiatives need to be prioritised

- Financial support is required to support international students during times of financial crisis
- There are opportunities for institutions and government to work together more cohesively to address challenges that international students face

Exhibit 2: The Benefits of strong social connections: Indian student mobility to Australia: developing the knowledge base for more effective engagement.



Theme 2: The future of online learning

In this section Bruce Bayley discussed challenges and changes that have emerged in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on comprehensive datasets as well as SPP research, he outlined key trends in the sector. Bruce Bayley argued that on-shore education and life experience will continue to be valued, but pure online learning is considered much less desirable.

International students often reported that online learning did not meet their expectations, they lacked academic support and that tuition fees were disproportionately high for online offerings.

International students also had concerns that degrees acquired strictly online would not be recognised in the same way as degrees acquired through in person learning.

The increase in online learning has also generated a cohort of learners, who want access to shorter courses which are aimed at addressing specific skills gaps. These learners are often mid-career professionals seeking cost effective short courses that are recognised by industries. In this context, some universities have increased and diversified their online short course and accreditation offerings. However, Bruce Bayley noted that more needed to be done in this space.

This summary led to the follow questions to prompt discussion:

- 1) How have university attitudes changed in relation to online learning since adopting it in response to the pandemic?
- 2) What advantages of online learning will remain moving into the future?
- 3) What didn't work and what challenges have arisen as a result of online learning?
- 4) What role will online learning play in the future and how will this affect the on-campus experience?

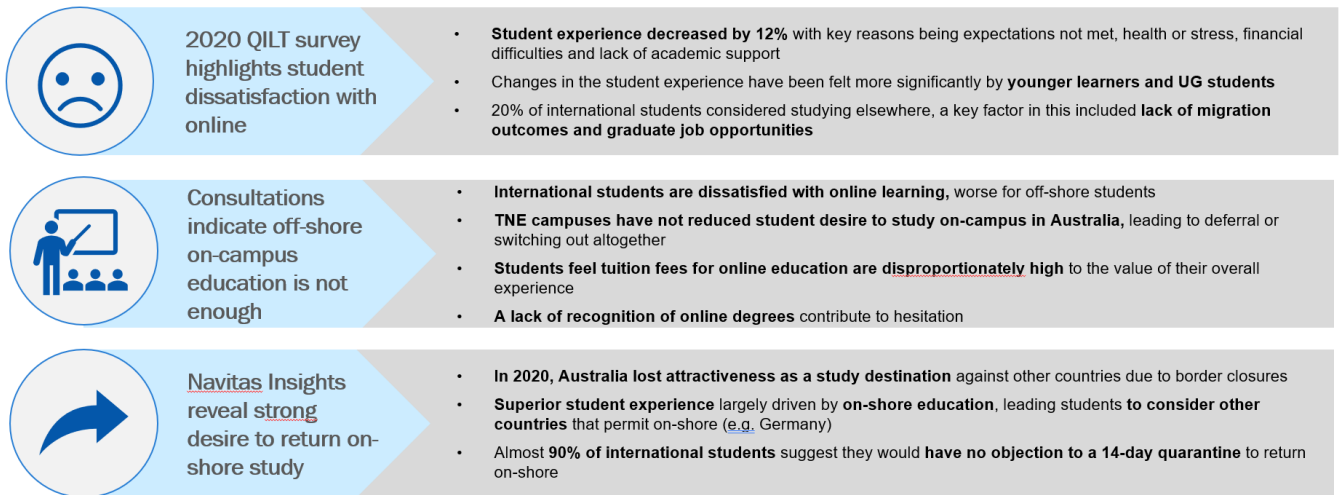
Key insights from stakeholders

- Student and general community acceptance of online education is not optimal – perception that it is lower quality
- Online learning is good for theoretical rather than practical courses
- Opportunities to collaborate between Australian and Indian universities via regional hubs where theoretical components are delivered online but practical elements would need to be delivered in physical international hubs
- Balancing diversity through online is difficult especially when matching students with similar geographies and time-zones
- Live engagement is important and recorded classes do not foster this

- Issues with Zoom engagement between students with online still an area for improvement
- Important to have facilitators for both online and on-campus classes
- Need to rethink how courses are charged to balance value proposition and cost for online learning
- There is no guarantee off-shore students have access to the same resources such as internet and access to devices compared to Australia

On-shore education and life experience will continue to be highly valued, pure online is a less desirable

Exhibit 3: QILT Student Survey (2020), Expert Consultations by SPP (2021), Navitas Survey Insights (2021)



Theme 3: Future opportunities for research collaborations

In this final section of the workshop, Dr Deuchar reported on research that he conducted in partnership with Brigid Freeman from the Australia India Institute. This research project was commissioned by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment to investigate characteristics of successful collaborations between Australia and India.

They conducted in depth interviews with 21 academics in Australia and India who had built successful collaborations. Some of these academics had built collaborations in an organic way by leveraging personal connections, others were formalised through institutional arrangements. Analysis of their activities revealed the following seven good practices:

Good practices

1. Physical mobility, particularly in the early stages;
2. A spectrum of research, collaboration and teaching elements

3. A relationship built over time, for the long term
4. A relationship built on mutual interests and complementary capabilities
5. Understanding the diversity of India
6. Harnessing new communication technologies
7. Visibility and consolidation of Australia's research strengths and focus on India.

After briefly outlining and discussing each of these good practices, Dr Deuchar proposed the following questions for discussion:

- 1) How can these practices be built into Higher Degree Research students' workshops and programs?
- 2) In what other ways can institutions support HDR students so that they can participate in these good practices
- 3) What additional good practices are there that the report did not identify?

Key insights from stakeholders

- There are opportunities to target institutions of speciality to collaborate connect researchers
- There is a need to find synergies between institutions to build trust and lasting relationships
- Strengths of universities should be identified before exploring capacity building programs
- More needs to be done to ensure degrees and capabilities are recognised between countries
- Opportunities for research orientated institutions to build 'sister' school relationships to embed collaboration systematically
- Important to diversify collaboration opportunities (e.g. both public and private universities)

- Opportunities to apply new communication technologies to build efficiencies and facilitate collaborations
- Opportunities to collaborate with industry when designing programs
- Students rely on tried and tested pathways

Partner organisations involved in this workshop were pleased to have such strong contributions and engagement from stakeholders. Their feedback and insights will form a critical knowledge base that will inform the white paper that will be shared at the completion of the workshop series.

This will be important for harnessing opportunities for education and innovation between Australia and India.

We look forward to hosting the second workshop on the series in March 2022. The theme for the following workshop will be "Industry Engagement".



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