Leveraging social marketing strategies to promote global citizenship among university students

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Leveraging social marketing strategies to promote global citizenship among university students

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Abstract
Universities globally are increasingly seeking to improve the international mobility of their students. There are several latent benefits that accrue to a university, whose students and staff actively participate in international exchange programs. Essentially this can lead to an increase in the university’s international reputation, opportunities for benchmarking against best practices, capacity to develop international relationships, diversity of student population and access to potential recruitment markets. In this paper we review extant literature to elicit the range of practical factors that play a role in the decision of students to study abroad. We then recommend practical social marketing strategies to enhance student mobility and promote global citizenship. The implications of these recommendations for universities and the broader student population are discussed with suggestions for future research.

Background
The vision and mission statements of Australian universities abound with references to ‘internationalisation’, ‘student mobility’ and ‘global citizenship’. A quick review of the websites of these universities has revealed that majority of them are increasingly seeking to improve the international mobility of their students as a solution to creating global citizens. Student mobility is a critical factor in the achievement of this vision, but concerns are raised as to the costs and benefits of pursuing this agenda. here is no doubt that the major beneficiary of an international educational experience is the home country (Kelo et al., 2006). On the other hand, the costs and only some of the benefits accrue to the student who has to attend (De Ville et al., 1996; Throsby, 1998).

A major problem in terms of assessing the benefits of student mobility is that the outcome, to a high degree, is in terms of non-measurable value and hence it is it difficult for a university to fully monitor and estimate the costs of participation in students’ mobility (Throsby, 1998). Indeed, it can appear to be that the costs to a university of encouraging student mobility are greater than the benefits, if one is using a purely economically rational argument. However there are several important related issues as is evident from our literature review.

Literature review
Changes to established behaviours are often difficult to bring about. However, change is possible, and like many things, values and behaviours conducive to such change need to be marketed. To facilitate this, we propose a social marketing model. Social marketing is the use of commercial marketing tools and techniques to facilitate behavioural change (Andreasen 1994). Generally, social marketing is applied to encourage individuals and/or groups to voluntarily adopt socially desirable practices, in this case travel overseas for an educational experience. The concept of social marketing has been applied to a diverse range of social issues including encouraging safe sex (Eloundou-Enyegue 2005), driving
speed reduction (Rossiter and Thornton 2004) and the wearing of seat belts (Delaney, Lough et al. 2004); and health issues such as children’s health (Meyer, Brun et al. 2004), anti-smoking (Hastings and Saren 2003), gambling addiction (Drennan, Previte et al. 2006) and control of obesity through diet and exercise (Donovan and Henley 2003). Environmentally related issues such as responsible water consumption and garbage recycling have also been the subject of social marketing campaigns (Andreasen 1994). We argue that such applications could be extended to the domain of encouraging the international mobility of Australian domestic students.

A review of the extant literature has revealed that some of the arguments in support of improving student mobility are:

- Enriching the study period for the students by providing them first-hand insights on conditions in other countries and widening their mental horizons (De Ville et al., 1996; Goodman et al., 2007; Kehm, 2005; Marcotte et al., 2007);
- Improvement in the reputation of the host country and the host country’s higher education system (Czinkota, 2005; Kehm, 2005; Marginson and van der Wende, 2007);
- Improvement in international trade opportunities, networks and relationships for the host and home countries (Goodman et al., 2007; Larsen et al., 2002; Larsen et al., 2004);
- Improvement in international work opportunities for the student upon graduation (Kehm, 2005; Li and Bray, 2007; Marcotte et al., 2007; Teichler and Janson, 2007);
- The development of cross-cultural knowledge that benefits the home country upon the students’ return (De Ville et al., 1996; Naidoo, 2006);
- The acquisition of specialist knowledge which is not available in the home country (Baruch et al., 2007; Bourke, 2000; Tremblay, 2005);
- The ability to attract future potential workers to the host country (Kehm, 2005; Tremblay, 2005).

None of these would appear to be of direct benefit to the modern university running an economically viable business. As a consequence, there is little incentive to finance, and support via services, the business of international exchange. However, the outcomes of increasing global citizenship can be an increase in internationalisation overall. That is, staff and students participating in such processes can lead to an increase in a university’s:

- International reputation (Marginson and van der Wende, 2007),
- Benchmarking opportunities, (Marginson and van der Wende, 2007)
- Capacity to develop international relationships that will foster both research and knowledge transfer (Charlton and Andras, 2006; Marginson and van der Wende, 2007; Stohl, 2007)
- Ability to participate in the ‘world community’ in an increasingly globalised world, (Charlton and Andras, 2006; Marginson and van der Wende, 2007)
- Diversity of the student population (increasing cultural exchange for students) (De Ville et al., 1996),
- Access to potential recruitment markets (staff and students) (Charlton and Andras, 2006).

We define student mobility in this context as a limited period of study in an international environment – 6 to 12 months (Kehm, 2005). In this context a ‘host country’ is where the student chooses to study. The ‘home country’ is the country where the students are undertaking their university study; this may or may not be their country of origin or
permanent residence. Figure 1 shows the increase in number of foreign students from about 0.6 million to 2.7 million in the period from 1975-2005. (OECD, 2007). 

![Figure 1. Development in number of foreign students worldwide in period from 1975-05 (OECD, 2007)](image1)

Examining the distribution of in and out going students it is evident that there is a very pronounced imbalance especially for the native English speaking countries, as illustrated in Figure 2. This is due to the fact that the language of instruction is a critical factor in the choice of country studying abroad (OECD, 2007).

There is a variety of practical factors that play a role in the decision of students not to study abroad and some of these are:

- The international experience is seen as an elective (and many students do not have spare electives in their programs); so, why make life more complicated than it is already? (Findlay et al., 2006)
- There are no clear results listed and the end result (of the study abroad) does not clearly contribute to a Grade Point Average, thereby limiting the prospects of high achieving students (Van Damme, 2000);
- Students are unwilling to increase the length (which mean costs) of time they study (Barron et al., 2007);
- Students are confused by the application process and often do not have time to consider their alternatives appropriately (Teichler, 2004);
- Internationalisation is not seen as of particular importance to the student or their teachers (Barron et al., 2007; Stohl, 2007);
- The cost of mobility can be high for the university which makes their support somewhat ambiguous (Strehl et al., 2007);
- Fee structures are irregular and confusing; (Rauhvargers et al., 2003; Tremblay, 2001);
- Degree structures are not harmonised with universities worldwide (Adam, 2001; Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana, 2007; Rauhvargers et al., 2003; Teichler, 2001);
- There is no global consistency in what is allowable and, internationally, government educational policies are not commensurate with exchange (Bourke, 2000; Stier, 2004; Trondal, 2002);

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1 http://www.oecd.org/education/database

The UNESCO/OECD/EUROSTAT (UOE) database on education statistics
Recommendations

There are several issues which deter Australian universities from encouraging and promoting student mobility. These issues can broadly be categorised under five dimensions, i.e. Academic, Economic, Social, Political & Governmental, and Cultural. To overcome these issues a multi-faceted approach is necessary, hence we propose a ‘social marketing’ model which might be a worthwhile approach to consider. We believe that this would have particular value as the benefits of student mobility often accrue to others (Rothschild, 1979). Social marketing can be upstream or downstream (Niblett, 2005), it works best when there is a framework of legislation, enforcement and education (Smitow and Brennan, 2009 (forthcoming) and it requires motivation, opportunity and ability (Binney et al., 2006) on behalf of the individuals whose behaviour we are attempting to change. For the purposes of this paper, we use the term legislation to include statutes, rules, regulations and policies.

Social Marketing Strategies to enhance student mobility2.

1) Classroom Level (start with interpersonal interactions)
- Develop apposite examples including using the internet to interact on joint projects with other universities around the world, team role plays including foreign and local profiles and policies of inclusiveness which allow for students of all social and cultural backgrounds to provide input. This will build motivation and illustrate the variety of opportunities that exist for students.

2) Program or Course Level (develop motivation at the beginning and build personal relevance)
- Develop appropriate marketing of the requirement for global citizens in all courses, even though they have a local focus (such as education course), ensure that this is incorporated in all marketing and recruitment materials and activities (using downstream marketing to build motivation and opportunity);
- Review teaching and learning processes to create an international environment (downstream marketing illustrating the opportunities and the benefits, multiple audiences – the students and the staff would participate);
- incorporate examples of international research collaboration in all courses (motivation and opportunity);
- Suggestion that students be offered low cost ‘introduction to a language’ courses (one semester of study). This should increase students’ ability to participate, at least financially and it may also increase motivation;
- Adjust course content so that it does not inherently advantage ‘stay at home’ students (Legislation and enforcement is required and upstream marketing may be required if there are regulatory barriers to content adjustment). May involve widening the scope of the curriculum, increasing international range of case studies, and increasing the emphasis given to learning and authorities from other traditions;

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- Curriculum should provide ‘stay at home’ students with training in cross-cultural communication and with an appreciation of at least one alien tradition (increasing ability, this may also require legislation and enforcement);
- Curriculum map with international partners (upstream marketing to improve students’ ability to transfer. That is, some mobility will require agreements between host and home country organisations to be enabled).
- Develop virtual communities of practice (enhancing motivation, opportunity and ability).

3) Faculty Level (develop the expertise in your people)
- Practice should prioritise the development of international activities and experience (increasing opportunity);
- International experience should become a major positive criterion in both hiring and promotion decisions (increasing motivation, legislation and enforcement will also be required);
- A semester-abroad model of staff exchange, supported by preparation and training (increasing motivation, opportunity and ability, however it will also require legislation to legitimise and ensure participation);
- Short-term international experiences for staff where long term is not feasible (motivation, opportunity and ability in addition to upstream marketing to ensure funds are available and potentially legislation and enforcement to ensure that this takes place);
- Provide a supportive environment, rather than one dominated by bureaucratic procedures and locked doors (legislation and enforcement will enhance opportunity).

4) University Level (oversight the processes to ensure continuance)
- Dissemination of mission statements and strategic goals relating to mobility into all levels (legislation and motivation);
- Staff development and training (motivation and ability);
- Realistic assessment of staff workloads (it takes more time to be a global citizen), legislation and ability;
- Lobbying external bodies to provide scholarships and support for students to enable them to study overseas (legislation might be necessary but this will increase ability)

Discussion and managerial implications

We have demonstrated that by using social marketing strategies at the classroom, program, faculty and university levels it is possible to motivate, encourage and provide reasonable opportunities for students to take up international exchange programs. This will inevitably promote the concept of global citizenship, which will eventually result in a win-win situation for Australian universities, their students and staff. Universities are urged to consider our proposal carefully and to evaluate their upstream and downstream marketing activities in this context. There are certainly many long term benefits to be gained by universities and their main stakeholders, i.e. the community, industry and government. Future research should focus on the currently available international exchange programs in Australian universities, their popularity and rate of subscription. Additionally, it would be useful to obtain the perceptions of university students regarding international exchanges and this can easily be achieved using properly designed on-line
surveys. Primary data collected in the above manner would go a long way in fine tuning the social marketing strategies that we have suggested.

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