International Student Retention in the Australian Higher Education Setting: The Role of Internationalisation of the Curriculum

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis/project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Mohammad Bagher Naghdi

March 2015
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This endeavour is dedicated to Allah, Imam Mahdi (A) and the following people.

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## Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>RMIT University</td>
<td>Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>structural equation modelling</td>
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Abstract

Although there are a large number of studies that focus on factors influencing student retention, relatively few of these studies focus on the impact of an internationalised curriculum on student retention. The overall objective of this study was to explore the relationships between internationalised curriculum, international students’ satisfaction with the internationalised curriculum at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University and international students’ retention. Mixed methods research was used in the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in this study. The quantitative component consisted of data from the Higher Education Onshore – Student Experience Survey administered by the Survey Services Centre of RMIT University in 2012 and the qualitative component included analysis of interview data.

A sequential explanatory mixed methods design was used to explore the relationships between internationalisation of the curriculum and international students’ satisfaction with the internationalised curriculum. The themes emerging from the data were connected to the research purpose. Therefore, data were categorised into three themes with their subcategories. The three categories included: internationalised curriculum, international students’ satisfaction and international student retention.

The focus on four dimensions of curriculum (academic approach, course content and two measures of teaching method 1 & 2) and their relationship with student retention has provided important insights into understanding how these different elements of curriculum affect student retention. In this study it was assumed that the curriculum at RMIT University has been internationalised, and practical outcomes may result from this study regarding an understanding of the components of the internationalised curriculum and their relationship

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with student retention. This may help to create better institutional policies and inform better decision-making for university officials and administrators as they strive to internationalise RMIT University.
Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Higher education is one of the fastest growing service industries around the world, especially in developed countries. Australia’s international education and training sector is important to the country’s economic vitality and long-term prosperity. It delivers considerable economic wealth and cultural enrichment to Australian communities. The sector is Australia’s fourth largest export industry, earning A$15.7 billion during 2011 (Lynch, 2013). This was largely driven by higher education, which contributed 65.6% of the sector’s total revenue during this period (International Education Advisory Council, 2013).

This growth can be ascribed to two things: (i) growing economies have moved hundreds of millions of people into the middle class, giving them the means and the drive to pursue higher education (ABC News Australia, 2014) and (ii) there is an under-supply of educational institutions in developing countries (Alfrih, 2010; Market Inteligent for the Universities World Wide, 2014; Sun, 2010). Approximately half of the world’s student-aged population live in developing countries (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2000) where the demand for university places is not being met because there is a shortage of universities. The brightest students seek the best place to study, and this is often outside their home nation. There is competition for the tuition fees of international students (being one of the main sources of income for universities) as well as competition for talented students, and both of these factors have influenced the rapid growth of higher education (Wandering Scholars, 2005).
Australia, as well as many other countries, considers the enrolment of international students as a business opportunity and a source of significant income. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012), international education activity contributed A$15.7 billion export income to the Australian economy in 2011–12. Australian Universities are facing intense competition as higher education becomes rapidly globalised, and they are being challenged by well-known universities in other regions including the United States of America, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore. Global mobility in higher education and heightened international competition both contribute to the need for a better understanding of the factors influencing international students’ satisfaction with higher education.

According to (C. A. Ward, 2001), international students are expected to have the potential to change both the content and the process of education by bringing an international perspective to classroom discussions and by challenging teachers to consider new methods of instruction. International students, through payment of their academic expenses and tuition fees, also bring financial profits to universities (Cunningham, 1991). Full-fee paying international students are a major source of revenue for Australian universities, contributing close to A$3.8 billion in 2011 (Universities Australia, 2013). Australia can also fortify long-term trade, commercial and diplomatic links with other countries by training international students.

International students are increasingly being considered as customers who have expectations about what they want from the institution, and who evaluate their experience (Levitz, Noel, & Richter, 1999). Students pay directly for the cost of their studies, and because they are paying for a service to be delivered, it is reasonable that they should be
treated as customers (Kanji, Malek, & Tambi, 1999). Students, whether local or international, expect a high standard of service delivery (Mavondo, Zaman, & Abubakar, 2000) and quality has become a major preoccupation in the higher education sector (Wright & O'Neill, 2002). East (2002), in a study of international students’ expectations at La Trobe University, concluded that, “there is, therefore, a need to analyse international students’ perspectives in the light of customer expectations of quality service”.

In response to this changing dynamic between students and universities, many Australian universities have developed effective structures for supporting international students (Collet, 2010; Colvin & Jaffar, 2007; Perkovic, 2010). For instance, at some universities, international students are supported from the outset to adapt to their academic, sociocultural and linguistic environments, and they are particularly encouraged and supported to enhance their English language development through social interaction on and off campus. In this regard, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University has identified the need to provide these essential support services to international students in its strategic plan (Strategic Plan RMIT, 2015).

Most universities base their efforts to respond to international students’ needs on a range of market strategies (Rizvi, 2000a) that are designed to simply increase the number of international students enrolled and expand the university’s financial base. Although RMIT University has been successful in these efforts (Rizvi, 2000a), growth in student numbers alone is not sufficient to fully internationalise a university. Despite the expectation of having international students on campus, some researchers claim that the mere presence of international students is insufficient to foster intercultural interactions, develop intercultural friendships, and result in international understanding (Ward, 2001).
Universities should consider other aspects, and in this regard, Rizvi (Rizvi, 2000a) argues that a global university must be characterised by its engagement with the processes of globalisation, its international networks and its internationalised curriculum.

As Bond (2002) point out, it appears that the attainment of intercultural competence depends upon directed policy development and implementation rather than the mere presence of an international body of students. It is important that universities focus on developing the characteristics of an international university rather than simply increasing the number of international students.

If universities want to follow a path to internationalisation, they need to use international networks to promote issues of global interest. They need to have a dynamic body of students who can learn from each other to create lasting networks and also study an internationalised curriculum. As Knight (2004, p. 2) states, the topic of internationalisation, or “integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education”, has been an issue of concern for many universities. Universities must adopt these dimensions into curricula and services to facilitate greater holistic adoption of an international discipline that allows them to remain competitive.

Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) argue that newly arrived international students encounter various problems in their adjustment to learning and living in a new environment. They believe that these difficulties vary according to the students’ race, culture, country of origin and level of proficiency in English. According to Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping and Todman (2008), international students with different cultural backgrounds must contend with the novel social behaviours and expectations at
educational organisations. As a result, international students with different cultural backgrounds often face pedagogical and curricular adjustment difficulties due to teaching methods, styles, and expectations that can be different from those they are used to in their native cultures (Andrade, 2006; Arthur, 2004; Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Dalili, 1982; Durkin, 2008; Grey, 2002; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Zhai, 2002; Zhou et al., 2008). Andrade (2006) suggests that international students not only face several cultural challenges, but sometimes also face financial and immigration problems. International students also perceive the content of the curriculum as exclusionary and cite concerns that instructors show a lack of interest in their prior knowledge (Arthur, 2004; Chen, 1996; Grey, 2002; Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000). For these students, internationalisation is about transition from their culture to a new learning environment.

Some of the difficulties encountered by international students can come as a result of the traditional learning and teaching environments in Western universities not being aligned with the cultural backgrounds and diversity of the learning needs of the international student population (Adams, 1992; Guo & Jamal, 2007; Hayle, 2008; Joseph, 2008; Samuel & Burney, 2003; Schapper & Mayson, 2004; Sabine Schuerholz-Lehr, Caws, Van Gyn, & Preece, 2007; S Schuerholz-Lehr & van Gyn, 2006). Therefore, the focus of this study is on the retention of international students and includes both the curriculum and the pedagogy that international students experience in their courses at RMIT University.

Previous studies have shown that the gap between students’ expectations and their perception of service quality was a key variable in predicting overall satisfaction. In addition, several researchers have found that students’ satisfaction is an important
contributor to students’ retention (Spicuzza, 1992; Wince & Borden, 1995). Universities must consider the students’ perceptions and expectations of the ideal situation (the desired thought of what should be) and the real situation (the actual behaviour and existing circumstances). Then universities must provide a plan with the pedagogical and assessment skills they need to establish conditions in their classrooms that promote student involvement, learning and retention.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In response to the globalisation of commerce and communication driven by competition in the multi-billion dollar international market for higher education, many universities are seeking to market their courses internationally. The Australian international education sector has recently faced a number of challenges that have resulted in a decline in the number of enrolled international students (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

In RMIT University’s strategic plan for 2011–2015, the curriculum is seen as the primary vehicle for internationalising a campus, an idea that is common to other universities (Groennings & Wiley, 1990; Khalideen, 2006; Jane Knight, 1999; Maidstone, 1996). Curriculum serves as one of the key performance indicators of the internationalisation of an institution. In this study, I have made the assumption that, with this strong directive, most courses are internationalised in that they prepare the students to work globally. Sustaining appropriate levels of growth in the number of international students is another indicator of the internationalisation process. Limited research has been conducted on the impact of the internationalised curriculum on the retention of international students in the context of higher education in general and in Australian
institutions in particular. Despite the importance of student retention and progression, the problem of retaining student enrolment is less well understood than the process for recruiting new students (Derby & Smith, 2004; Trotter & Cove, 2005).

This study examines the relationship between international undergraduate students’ perception and satisfaction with the curriculum provided by RMIT University, and how this relates to the retention of international students.

In financial terms, the Association for Tertiary Education Management is the only professional association for administrators and managers working in higher education in Australia. The retention of students is one of the criteria affecting the Australian Government’s university funding decisions, and is an issue of sector-wide concern (Owens & Loomes, 2010). Further to this, the Association for Tertiary Education Management points out that the recruitment investment in international students is a particularly expensive endeavour and institutions need to maximise their returns by retaining the international students they recruit (Owens & Loomes, 2010).

Veenstra (2009) argues that for each student who leaves a college, there is a loss in revenue, such as tuition, to the college. As a result, attrition from college can be described conceptually in terms of a loss function. In addition, Tinto (1999) believes that many colleges speak of the importance of increasing student retention. Indeed, quite a few invest substantial resources in programs designed to achieve that end. As a result, most efforts to enhance student retention, although successful to some degree, have been less effective than they should or could have been. Tinto (1999) argues that because of the importance of students’ retention, universities should treat this issue seriously.
Bennet and Kane (2009) suggest that business schools and departments throughout the world are increasingly internationalising their curricula. Altbach and Knight (2007, p. 295) describe internationalisation of curricula as a “widespread phenomenon in industrialised nations” that provides effective cross-cultural educational preparation for students of universities. The internationalisation of curricula accompanies the physical movement of students, academic staff, providers and programs across international borders. The importance of international student retention (Olsen, 2008; Thomas, 2002; Tinto, 1999; Veenstra, 2009) and internationalising the curriculum (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Bennett & Kane, 2009; Fuller, 2009; Pinar, 2006; Van der Wende, 1997) has been studied by many researchers, but the influence of the internationalisation of the curriculum on the retention of international students has not yet been researched. This thesis makes an important contribution to this discussion.

In developing a model for the internationalisation of curriculum and student retention, this study will assess variables that significantly increase the probability of international student retention at Australian universities. This model will allow governments and universities to undertake a more informed analysis of international students’ perceptions of their educational experience. The results will help to fill the gap in the literature related to the internationalisation of curricula and its impact on international student retention.
1.3. Purpose of the Study

The general objective of this study is to explore the relationships between internationalisation of the curriculum, international students’ satisfaction with the curriculum and international students’ retention at RMIT University.

To respond to new challenges in higher education by addressing the needs and concerns of students with respect to internationalised curriculum, I take this analysis a step further and examine internationalised curriculum as a predictor of student satisfaction. This study identifies the most influential predictors of international students’ satisfaction with the internationalised curriculum and then creates a model of students’ satisfaction with the internationalised curriculum and students’ subsequent retention in higher education. The specific objectives of the research are as follows:

- To examine the relationship between internationalised curriculum (approach, method and content) and international students’ retention in higher education.
- To examine the relationship between internationalised curriculum and international students’ satisfaction with the curriculum.
- To examine the relationship between international students’ satisfaction with the curriculum and their retention in higher education.
- To examine the indirect relationship between internationalised curriculum and international students’ retention in higher education through students’ satisfaction with the curriculum.
1.4. Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between the internationalised curriculum and international students’ retention in higher education?
2. What is the relationship between the internationalised curriculum and international students’ satisfaction with the curriculum?
3. What is the relationship between international students’ satisfaction with the curriculum and international students’ retention in higher education?
4. Is there an indirect relationship between the internationalised curriculum and international students’ retention in higher education through students’ satisfaction with the curriculum?

1.5. Context of the Study

RMIT University is well renowned internationally as a tertiary institution providing an internationalised curriculum. Based on RMIT University’s strategic plan for 2011–2015, RMIT will be global in the way that it constructs its education and research, in the opportunities it offers students and staff, and by having a presence in selected cities across the globe. In this regard, RMIT University will be global in attitude, action and presence, offering students a global passport to learning and work in the following ways:

- Developing an integrated global strategy to guide the development of its global presence.
• Growing and diversifying RMIT’s network of teaching, research and industry partnerships in selected city locations across the world.

• Defining and delivering an RMIT student experience that is characterised by its global engagement, international mobility and cross-cultural opportunities.

• Having all RMIT staff support global engagement. (RMIT University, 2015)

There are several courses offered by RMIT University such as the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Communication that prepare students for professional employment in a range of organisations with an international focus, including government, private and community organisations both in Australia and overseas. There are also several courses such as the Bachelor of Architectural Design, Bachelor of Design and Bachelor of Applied Science that provide a wide range of international exchange opportunities with universities in USA, Europe and Asia. RMIT University also offers its students international work placements and group study tours for up to a month in Europe, Asia or the Americas.

RMIT University considers itself an internationalised university. The justifications for this consideration are pointed out in the RMIT Internationalisation Plan as follows:

• RMIT is well rated in global rankings.

• RMIT has high levels of enrolments from international students, both in Australia and elsewhere, including at branch campuses in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi in Vietnam, and in partnership programs in key cities in Asia.

• Among Australian universities, RMIT is first for overall international student enrolments, first for offshore enrolments, top 10 for international student enrolments onshore in Australia, and fifth for total outbound student mobility.
• RMIT has teaching, research or industry engagement presences in a variety of countries and regions, including Vietnam, China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Laos, Singapore, India, Belgium, Spain, the Americas and the Middle East.

• As a consequence, RMIT is well recognised in global academic communities, and is considered a valued contributor to the social and economic successes of a number of countries around the world.

I have therefore assumed that the curriculum at RMIT University is internationalised.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This research is designed to assist Australian higher education institutions with developing an understanding of the influence that internationalisation of the curriculum and international students’ satisfaction with the curriculum have on international students’ retention in a higher educational setting.

It is important for administrators and academics to have an understanding of the indicators of retention for international students at Australian universities. International students who are not satisfied with the curriculum at Australian universities may interrupt their educational goals. Nowadays, because higher education seems necessary in the modern workforce and educational goal achievement is vital for students, it is important that education leaders provide assistance for students to succeed in their studies. In addition, this study will make an important theoretical contribution to the literature by developing a conceptual model of the internationalisation of curricula with an emphasis on student retention. This model will help to fill the gap in the literature relating to
internationalisation of the curriculum and its effect on the retention of international students.

A research project to identify the key issues, challenges, threats and opportunities in Australia’s higher education sector was performed by Edu World Service Australia (2012). This project was conducted with senior people involved with international education at universities in Australia: Vice Chancellor, Director International, Dean (International Student Admissions), Associate Director International, Executive Director International, Vice-President (International and Development), and Director Marketing and International. When they were asked how well they felt Australia currently performs in terms of internationalisation and producing global citizens, there was significant agreement that there is indeed room for improvement. They have strong convictions about what needs to be changed to raise the quality of education. All agree that to truly be a global player, individuals, institutions and nations must embrace and exude internationalisation. This supports the need for continued research in this area as well as illustrating the importance of this research.

The results of this research will identify aspects of the curriculum that are important to international students at an Australian university. Do Australian higher education systems with internationalised curricula play a significant role of preparing graduates with a strong knowledge of, and skills in, intercultural relations and communication?
1.7. Limitations

Although internationalisation of the curriculum has an important place in all areas of higher education, this study focuses on RMIT University. It is anticipated that the results of this study may be applicable to other universities that enrol large numbers of international students, but this may not be possible because the study was based at RMIT University. Furthermore, because of the limited number of students interviewed in the qualitative phase of the study, the sample may not be representative of all university students (John W. Creswell, 2003).

1.8. Assumptions

Altbach and Knight (2007) point out that internationalisation has included “policies and practices undertaken by institutions to cope with the globalised academic environment” (p. 290). The American Council on Education has established a series of recommendations for the internationalisation of curricula. Firstly, they suggest that institutions must ensure that curriculum internationalisation efforts have active leadership, a characteristic indicated by ongoing communications regarding “importance of internationalisation to the community”; continual devotion of funds to internationalisation efforts; and widespread participation and leadership from administration and faculty.

Secondly, institutions must establish a strategic framework to govern these internationalisation efforts. Developing this framework begins with conducting an internal review, a process that may involve making an inventory of existing internationalisation efforts and conducting interviews and surveys with students and faculty members. Within this
strategic framework, an institution must articulate international learning outcomes by identifying opportunities for achieving these outcomes through academic programming and developing a plan for their assessment. From here, an internationalisation plan must be developed, which typically covers all institution-wide internationalisation efforts. A successful plan aligns internationalisation of the curriculum with other initiatives designed to internationalise the institution. According to The American Council on Education, one recommended strategy is to offer financial incentives for individuals to propose internationalisation plans for departments or faculties within the institution.

Thirdly, the American Council on Education recommends several activities, including the development of opportunities for faculty members to teach and perform research at foreign institutions. Faculty members may also travel abroad as part of study programs or to attend conferences. Institutions may also consider expanding professional development programs to place a priority on internationalisation, offering funding for faculty members who internationalise their courses and providing workshops to guide faculty members in these efforts.

Lastly, the American Council on Education suggests that institutions can focus on curriculum simply by adapting their requirements for a greater international focus. For example, an institution may enforce a foreign language requirement or require that its students complete non-Western courses or courses with an international or global focus.

Bennet and Kane (2009) assume that internationalisation involves sets of activities, managerial inclinations, organisational and funding arrangements, and strategic decisions. Internationalisation activities include international franchising, curriculum internationalisation, exchange programs and the recruitment of foreign teaching staff. Managerial inclinations
extend to the desire to use internationalisation to improve students’ overall experiences and to enhance the quality of teaching. Organisational arrangements encompass the development of systems for monitoring and refining an institution’s internationalisation endeavours and for implementing strategic internationalisation plans.

1.9. Definition of Terms

**Higher education:** Throughout the world, the term higher education is used to define, in a broad sense, post-secondary education. In some cases, it is used only for universities and prestigious schools of professional or artistic training. In this study, the term higher education refers only to universities in Australia.

**International student:** This term applies to an individual with the motivation and opportunity to pursue education outside of his or her home country. The Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations defines international students as individuals who study at Australian or New Zealand universities, have temporary student visas, and are full-fee paying.

**Internationalisation:** The process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education (Jane Knight, 2003).

**Internationalised curriculum:** A curriculum with an international orientation in content that is designed for domestic and international students and is aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally or socially) in an international and multicultural context (Bremer & van der Wende, 1995). Internationalisation of a curriculum should not be limited to content alone (Eisenchlas & Trevaskes, 2003), but should include considerations of

16
process (i.e., how teaching and learning occurs) and context (i.e., where, when, why and to whom content is taught; Freire, 2005). However, an internationalised curriculum should also address issues of pedagogy and cross-cultural understanding. There may be other variables that could influence the level of internationalisation of curriculum, but this study will focus only on the above-mentioned variables.

**Retention:** The continuous enrolment of a student in successive semesters until the successful completion of a degree (Durivage, 2001).

**Satisfaction:** A value judgment based on the gap between the actual experiences and expectations of the student (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1990).
Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The following chapter contains a literature review on curriculum internationalisation, student retention and student satisfaction in four major parts. The first part (beginning with Section 2.2) reviews the internationalisation of higher education in Australia. The second part (beginning with Section 2.6) provides a general overview of curriculum internationalisation. The third part (beginning with Section 2.11) is an analysis of the literature on internationalising students’ satisfaction and retention. The fourth part (beginning with Section 2.13) describes the theoretical framework according to Bremer and Van der Wende’s internationalised curriculum model (Bremer & van der Wende, 1995), the expectancy–disconfirmation theory and student integration theory (Tinto, 1975).

2.2. Profile of International Students in Australia

Australian universities have been regarded as some of the most popular destinations for international students since Australia opened its doors to international students in 1985 (Sidhu, 2005). According to Beazley (1992):

As Australia moves towards better relations and economic integration with the rest of the world, there is increasing realisation that the interest of the Australian people is better served by opening its campuses to students from around the world, in particular its Asian and Pacific neighbours. (p. 1)

Moreover, Knight and DeWit (1995) state that:
The global role of international education in Australia is expressed in the volume and spread of foreign enrolments, the countries from which international students come, and the programs they enter. Further, the growth in numbers of international students studying in higher education institutions in Australia has been seen as a significant part of the internationalisation process. (p. 39)

According to the Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, international students are those who study at Australian or New Zealand universities with a temporary student visa and full tuition-fee payment. International students can also be defined as individuals who temporarily reside in the host country while studying or as individuals who are enrolled in an campus that is offshore from the host country (Lukic, Broadbent, & Maclachlan, 2004).

International students can bring advantages in the cultural diversity that provide to students and staff. International students also can break down national myopia and create opportunities for multicultural and cross-cultural education. In addition, international students have become a kind of curriculum source to support the enhancement of cross-cultural knowledge (Back, Davis, & Olsen, 1997; Curro & McTaggart, 2003; Hamilton, 1998; Leask, 2001; Schapper & Mayson, 2004).

In the year to March 2013, 338,916 full-fee paying international students were enrolled in Australian universities on a student visa (Austraian International Education, 2013). This was a 3.2% decrease on the previous 12 months, and is contrary to the average growth rate of 5.6% per year in the previous 10 years. In the year to March 2013, there were 117,101 commencements, which was a 3.2% increase over the same period in 2012. This is comparable
to the average growth rate for commencements of 4.2% per year in the previous 10 years (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. International Student Commencements by Sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher education</td>
<td>191,203</td>
<td>186,785</td>
<td>−2.3%</td>
<td>49,598</td>
<td>52,148</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational education</td>
<td>88,862</td>
<td>76,604</td>
<td>−13.8%</td>
<td>28,675</td>
<td>26,925</td>
<td>−6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELICOS Schools</td>
<td>41,041</td>
<td>45,653</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>21,194</td>
<td>22,544</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-award</td>
<td>13,485</td>
<td>14,186</td>
<td>−4.9%</td>
<td>4,043</td>
<td>4,420</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total in Australia</td>
<td>349,947</td>
<td>338,916</td>
<td>−3.2%</td>
<td>113,467</td>
<td>117,101</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Education International YTD (March 2013).
ELICOS: English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2013) reported that there was a 27% growth in the number of higher education student visas granted to offshore applicants in the last six months of 2012 compared with the same period in 2011. These changes were expected to lead to an increase in higher education commencements in 2013 but this did not eventuate. This is possibly a consequence of Australian Government reforms that emerged in response to the Knight review of Australia’s student visa system (Gribble & Blackmore, 2012), which resulted in the introduction of streamlined visa procedures and new arrangements for post-study work visas (see Figure 2.1).
According to Australian Education International (2013; see Table 2.2), China maintains the highest share of total enrolments (31.1%); India is in second place with 8.9%, followed by Malaysia and the Republic of Korea (5.0%). In all of the countries listed (except Vietnam), enrolments declined (see Table 2.2). Considering the reasons for such a decline is not within the scope of the present research.
Table 2.2. International Students by Nationality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Mar 2012</th>
<th>Mar 2013</th>
<th>Growth in year to Mar 2012</th>
<th>Share of all nationalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>108,482</td>
<td>105,547</td>
<td>−2.7%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>36,564</td>
<td>30,023</td>
<td>−17.9%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Korea</td>
<td>17,797</td>
<td>16,982</td>
<td>−4.6%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>17,866</td>
<td>16,830</td>
<td>−5.8%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>15,486</td>
<td>16,342</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other nationalities</td>
<td>153,752</td>
<td>153,192</td>
<td>−0.4%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All nationalities</td>
<td>349,947</td>
<td>338,916</td>
<td>−3.2%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Education International YTD (March 2013).

2.3. Internationalisation of Higher Education in Australia

The internationalisation of higher education in Australia has been based on social, political and economic rationales. Australia has developed its internationalisation of education structure over a number of years. Australia has exhibited consistent system development through national initiatives and government strategies that have been highly dependent on the initiatives of individual institutions. Studies on the internationalisation of higher education in Australia have demonstrated that Australia considers the export of education services to be significant, while in some other parts of the world, internationalisation is widely dependent on international power (Harman, 2005).

The internationalisation of education in Australia began in the 1980s and continued through the 1990s to the present day. Internationalisation of education has been of great importance to both federal government policy and university operations. It is also best
understood in the context of the radical higher education policy reforms occurring since the 1980s (Marginson & Considine, 2000).

Several studies have demonstrated that the internationalisation of Australian higher education emerged from a national policy initiative (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2003; Pimpa, 2003, 2005). According to Leask (2003):

This policy allowed unlimited numbers of overseas students to enrol in Australian universities provided they met entry requirements, paid full tuition fees and didn’t displace an Australian student. (P. 2)

The focus of internationalisation changed from aid to trade and then to international education (Back et al., 1997). This means that internationalisation of Australian higher education has transformed from a political rationale of technical help to an economic rationale of trade (H. de Wit, 2001). In the internationalisation of Australian higher education, economic rationales have existed in international education marketing and exchanges to encourage student mobility (Pratt & Poole, 1999). Through the commercialisation of Australian education in the 1990s, Australia became a main contributor in the universal trade of education services (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2001). Australia is now known as the third largest educational service provider for international students after the United States and the United Kingdom (Australian Education International, 2006).

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012), A$15.3 billion was earned from international education activity in Australia in 2011–2012, and A$14.8 billion of the total income came from fees, goods and services provided to onshore students, and A$538 million came through offshore and other educational programs.
In addition economic benefits, international engagement has resulted in academic and social advantages for Australian universities. The international engagement of Australian universities has led to cooperation among regional universities, staff and student exchange programs, research projects, and inter-governmental projects (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2001).

Australian universities have educationally and culturally developed the corporatisation of higher education by serving multi-cultural, multi-national, multi faith and multi-ethnic students. This means that Australian institutions have a global perspective in higher education and effective frameworks to manage student diversity (PBarron, Baum, & Conway, 2007; Barron & Arcodia, 2002; Jordan, 2008). Harman (2005) has demonstrated that curriculum quality is one of the most significant traits supporting the existence of Australian higher education in the international arena.

Australian universities have attempted to move towards internationalisation through internationalising their faculties (Goodwin & Nacht, 2009), registering students to take general education courses overseas (M. F. Green, 2005), developing educational partnerships with overseas institutions (Selingo, 2007), enrolling international students and establishing campuses overseas (Altbach, 2002), transferring students overseas (Obst, 2007), and seeking to diversify those students going overseas (Dessoff, 2006).

Jolley (1997) states that, “the reputation of Australian curriculum in science and research centres, and education quality issues, have been of prime concern for prospective international students and their parents or employers when choosing their destination of study”. Additionally, recent research conducted by a global investment bank (HSBC, 2014) found that Australia does not rank very well on the question of perceived quality. Graham Heunis who is the HSBC head of retail banking and wealth management said, “parents, in
particular Chinese parents, have a less favourable view of Australian education” (A. Hall, 2014), which could be the due to a combination of both perceived quality and cost.

Some other studies have shown that the important factors in the development of the internationalisation of Australian higher education were flexible tourism, an embedded global perspective in curriculum design, and effective frameworks to handle student diversity and meet local and international students’ demands (Barron & Arcodia, 2002; Craig-Smith & Ding, 2007; Jordan, 2008). Nowadays, with encouragement from the government, Australian higher education focuses on facilitating an understanding of other cultures to support economic development and export higher education services (Harman, 2005). RMIT University is an internationalised university with large numbers of international students from 177 countries and has a significant role in maintaining the reputation of higher education in Australia. Despite its success, RMIT University is looking for ways to internationalise the institution further, with the new strategy firmly committed to strengthening its global presence (RMIT Strategic Plan, 2011-2015).

2.4. Internationalisation at RMIT University

After its first international enrolment under the Colombo Plan in 1955 (Murray-Smith & Dare, 1987), during the last 25 years, RMIT University has achieved a significant international reputation based on an international engagement. RMIT University enrolls a high number of international students, both in Australia and worldwide. RMIT University is the highest-ranked Australian university for offshore enrolments, first for overall international student enrolments, top 10 for international student enrolments onshore in Australia, and fifth for total outbound student mobility (AUIdF, 2011). RMIT University has research, teaching
and industry engagement in countries such as China, Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Laos, India, Spain, Belgium, the Americas and the Middle Eastern countries. Consequently, RMIT University is well known in the global academic world and participates in the social and economic successes of many countries.

The RMIT University curriculum has become internationalised with the global presentation of RMIT programs as well as the global careers of its students. Internationalisation requires universities to follow global trends in international education and consider international issues. In Australia, enrolments of onshore international students have declined, but the number of international students continues to increase worldwide (Hansson & Charbonnier, 2010). Michael Knight’s review of Australia’s student visa program (Gribble & Blackmore, 2012) has suggested some policies to facilitate entry of international students into Australian universities. Recently, the number of students leaving transnational programs has been higher than the number of students entering these programs (Cantwell, 2001 #587). The number of students leaving Australia is increasing and the Australian national average now exceeds that of the United States, but the imbalance between the number of international students in Australia and the number of Australian students who study overseas becomes a concern to international student source countries.

Australian universities allocate about 5% of the tuition fees received from international students to stipends, scholarships and fee-waivers for international higher degree research students as part of the international competition for higher degree research students and academic staff (Olsen, 2011). With RMIT University’s good reputation for offering courses to international students, it may be advantageous to subsidise this area even further.
2.5. International Student’s Perspective, Satisfaction and Retention in Australia

Student and institutional perspectives regarding student satisfaction represent two distinct attitudes towards the educational experience. Based on students’ perspectives, satisfaction and retention both matter for the successful completion of higher education courses and can improve career opportunities and financial conditions. Based on an institutional perspective, high student satisfaction can mean high student retention that brings financial benefits for the university, as opposed to when students leave the university before graduation and take their fees with them. In higher education, retention is not as costly as enrolling new students (Bejou, 2005). Despite the importance of student retention, activities to ensure the retention of students who have enrolled in their programs are not as obvious as the process of enrolling new students (Derby & Smith, 2004; Trotter & Cove, 2005).

Although the growth in numbers of international students in Australia is due to the internationalisation process, changes to the cultural habits of students have led to educational problems such as cross-cultural communication issues and provision of international courses and learning support. These issues are important for all student groups (J. Biggs, 1997; Jane Knight & De Wit, 1995). Sometimes there are components of internationalisation, but comprehensive internationalisation does not exist (Goodwin & Nacht, 2009; M. F. Green, 2005). For instance, enrolling international students, offering foreign languages, and preparing curriculum with universal components might all be present but the involvement and presence of international students in campus activities which are vary according to the needs of the international students might be absent. Thus, understanding the extent to which students are involved in internationalisation can enhance the impact of university efforts.
If the major goal of internationalisation at universities is to grow the knowledge and skills of students (Heyneman, 2002; Raby & Valeau, 2007; Scott, 1994), then those in charge of this growth should understand how students become involved in internationalisation. According to Reimers (2009), global competency has three interdependent dimensions:

1. A positive approach toward cultural differences and a willingness to engage those differences
2. The ability to speak, understand and think in several foreign languages
3. Broad and deep knowledge of world history and an understanding of the process of globalisation itself.

Universities are particularly well situated to contribute to these three key dimensions of global education, and “they can do that for their students by placing those objectives squarely in the middle of their missions” (Reimers, 2009, p. 2).

According to English (1998), understanding the impact of internationalisation on students at the institutional level is possible “only by looking at the relationship between predictors and outcomes in a broad context [so that] the evaluator [can] attribute change to particular learning experiences” (cited in J. A. Mestenhauser & Ellingboe, 1998, p. 185). In addition, to facilitate competition internationally, “more student-centred approaches and flexibility will be required as well as high standards in student services and facilities” (Van der Wende, 2001, p. 257).

A number of studies have investigated international students’ issues and attempted to understand their expectations of Australian universities (Duan, 1997; Gatfield, Barker, & Graham, 1999; Lawley, 1993). According to a 1999 survey by Australian Education International (2002), education services are the most important factor in student satisfaction.
Another study has found that international students are largely satisfied with their experiences in Australian universities (Australian Education International (AEI), 1998). In a 2005 survey carried out by Australian Education International, 85% of international students were satisfied or very satisfied with studying in Australia, 88% would suggest studying in Australian universities or colleges to family, 83% were satisfied or very satisfied with courses they completed (Australian Education International (AEI), 2007). In general, international students consider Australia to be a safe, lively and overall suitable country for living and studying (AEI, 2007). Australia is seen as a safer place for students in terms of potential exposure to drug addiction and violence, compared with the United States (AEI, 2002).

The Australian Education International Student Survey (2007) also found that social integration issues, such as Australian views toward international students and having close relationships between international and local Australian students, are of great importance to international students. However, Australia did not perform well in terms of assisting international students with the cost of living and helping to find part-time work for international students (AEI, 2007). Another survey found that international students are more eager to continue or complete their studies than Australian students (Olsen & Spain, 2008). As Australian universities have faced issues such as decreased funding, increased student diversity, demands from industry and society, and higher education policy changes, student retention is still a major issue (Scott, Shah, Grebennikov, & Singh, 2008).

There has been a dramatic fall in the amount of funding allocated to Australian universities over the previous decade (Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee, 2005; Soutar & Turner, 2002) and there has been a sharp reduction in international student enrolment (Australia Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training, 2007).
Understanding the factors affecting the retention of international students is of great importance to higher education providers if they are to stay viable in the market.

According to Armani (2008), one of the contributors to increased retention and successful completion of degrees for international students is the international atmosphere at a university. An international atmosphere will not only educate the international students about the host country’s culture, but will also educate local students and community members about the cultures of students enrolled in the university. Furthermore, Lusia (2013) found that campus diversity or internationalised atmosphere is the first internationalisation element that is shared by all stakeholders.

The literature suggests that the presence of international students diversifies a student body through the variety of nationalities, cultures and languages (Lewis, 2005); adds diversity to college classrooms; promotes cross cultural dialogue; and enriches the learning environment and experiences of local students (Hayward & Siaya, 2001; Rai, 2002; K. Ward, 2003). According to Gurin (1999), students with more diverse experiences show greater relative gains in critical and active thinking. Experience with diversity also appears to be positively associated with retention rates and degree aspirations (Chang, 1999). The presence of international students on campus creates an opportunity for cross-cultural communication and interaction. Volet and Ang (2012) claim that, “This interaction is critical for developing the culturally sensitive emotional intelligence for building and cultivating positive relationships with diverse social groups” (p. 33). However, one of the major obstacles to achieving the educational, social and cultural goals of international education is the lack of interaction between local and international students.
While the market is increasing rapidly, it can be profitable for Australian stakeholders to obtain a comprehensive understanding of international students’ needs. Such an understanding can improve Australian universities’ marketing strategies and help them to develop internationally. There is evidence from survey reports (Burns, 1991; Volet & Pears, 1994, 1995) and research studies (Nesdale & Todd, 1993; Quintrell & Westwood, 1994; Volet & Ang, 1996) that the two groups (Australian and international students) do not mix readily and tend to study in parallel throughout their courses. Oberg (2006) believes that Australian students’ tendency to prefer low levels of cross-cultural interactions is one of the major concerns for the future of the internationalisation of higher education in Australia.

This problem is not only caused by local students; sometimes international students keep themselves away from Australian students, preferring contact with students who speak the same language and share the same cultural background. This is evident on the university campus in the way students make contacts and communicate with each other based on race and culture. These observations are supported by Yeh (2003) who has found that international students tend to remain exclusively in limited groups of their fellow nationals.

Negative experiences of interactions with local students can negatively influence international students’ spirit, which results in their dissatisfaction. But communicating with local students whose native language is English can raise international students’ proficiency in English. Therefore, the international students can study better and improve their self-confidence. Oberg (2006) states that, “Once you begin to be able to carry on a friendly conversation with your maid, your neighbour, or go on shopping trips alone you not only gain confidence and a feeling of power but a whole new world of cultural meanings open up for you” (p. 49).
Most international students in Australia come from developing countries and the economies of their countries waver with parameters that may not be important for the Australian economy. For instance, a political difference between the United States and India or Russia causes the value of their national currency to decrease. This has a great impact on the students of those countries who are studying abroad.

As Hughey and Hughey (2006) and Sun (2010) state, many international students dream of studying abroad. Most international students intend to fulfil this dream in any possible way and under any circumstances. There is competition between families to send their children abroad to pursue their studies. In some developing countries, studying abroad (especially in developed countries such as Australia) can give their children credibility. Farrell (2007) states that in recent years, studying abroad has grown in both prestige and popularity. Moreover, according to Fry (1984), people from Third World societies believe that studying abroad will enhance their prestige. They try to save as much as possible in their home countries and they also try to convince their parents to pay for their educational living expenses.

The research conducted by Sandra (2008) in Sydney, found that there are many issues and challenges in the everyday life of international students. Some of the major issues reported by both service providers and international students included accommodation, public transport, safety, social isolation, financial hardship and a lack of support services. International students expect universities to help them with at least in some of these issues because the university knows of the high educational expenses and pressures placed on students.
In their research on Hispanic speaking students, McDonald, McDonald and Davis (2009) found that enrolment and retention levels among students in higher education are strongly influenced by their perception of the service provided by the financial aid office; however, there is a lack of literature in Australia that can cast a light on the state of international students’ finances. Forbes-Mewett et al. (2009) claimed that the knowledge of the state of international students’ finances in Australia is even less clear than it is in New Zealand.

The importance of students’ identification and involvement with their university to compensate for external pressures has been discussed in the literature (Berger & Malaney, 2003; Harrison, 2006; Tinto, 1993; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Harrison (2006) has also theorised that there are important factors, such as a strong social network, that bind students to the university. When the sense of community is sufficiently strong, it helps students withstand negative factors in other experiential areas. In a similar vein, Laanan (2007) concluded that student involvement with faculty and other students strongly influences students’ persistence, retention and overall satisfaction with the university. University involvement has ly been found to improve students’ satisfaction and retention (Aitken, 1982; Berger & Malaney, 2003; Christie, Munro, & Fisher, 2004; Pennington, 2006; Santos Laanan, 2007).

2.6. Definition of Internationalisation

The present research investigates the relationship between internationalisation and students’ experiences of university study. Although internationalisation is a popular phenomenon among international academic centres, finding a single umbrella definition is challenging. Some definitions consider the content of internationalisation, whereas others consider the procedures of internationalisation. From a traditional perspective in higher
education, academic staff have considered content instead of procedure (Leask, 2001). For instance, Arun and Van de Water (1992) define internationalisation as the activities, services and programs of international studies, technical cooperation and international education exchanges. Mestenhauser (2002) defines internationalisation as “a program of change aiming to make international education a super-ordinate field of knowledge, inquiry and application, which is interdisciplinary, multi-dimensional and multi-cultural” (p. 170).

Other studies have defined internationalisation as a process (Ellingboe, 1998; Francis, 1993; Jane Knight & De Wit, 1995; Rudzki, 1998; Schoorinan, 1999; Söderqvist, 2002).

According to Ellingboe (1998):

Internationalisation is the process of integrating an international perspective into a college or university system. It is an on-going future oriented, multi-dimensional interdisciplinary, leadership-driven vision that involves many stakeholders working to change the internal dynamics of an institution to respond and adapt appropriately to an increasingly diverse, globally focused, ever-changing external environment. (p. 199)

Similarly, for Rudzki (1998), internationalisation is:

a process of organisational change, curriculum innovation, staff development and student mobility for the purpose of attaining excellence in teaching, research, and the other activities which universities undertake as part of their function. (p. 16)

Söderqvist (2002) sees internationalisation as:

A change process from a national higher education institution to an international higher education institution leading to the inclusion of an international dimension in all aspects of its holistic management in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and to achieve the desired competencies. (p. 29)
For Francis (1993), “internationalisation is a process that prepares the community for successful participation in an increasingly interdependent world” (p. 14). Schoorinan (1999) defines internationalisation as:

An on-going, counter hegemonic educational process that occurs in an international context of knowledge and practice, where societies are viewed as subsystems of a larger, inclusive world. The process of internationalisation at an educational institution level entails a comprehensive, multifaceted program of action, which is integrated into all aspects of education. (p. 21)

Several definitions of internationalisation have been compiled by de Wit (2001), and later Lizarraga (2011a) added other scholars’ definitions of internationalisation such as those of Callan (2000), Soderqvist (2001) and Altbach (2006) as shown in the Table 2.3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Definition of internationalisation</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ebuchi (1989) de Wit, (p. 113)</td>
<td>…is a process by which the teaching, research and service functions of a higher education system become internationally and cross-culturally compatible.</td>
<td>National level. Process approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arum &amp; Van de Water (1992) de Wit, (p. 112)</td>
<td>The multiple activities, programs and services that fall within international studies, international educational exchange and technical co-operation.</td>
<td>Institutional/national level. Activities approach; educational exchange; and cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Association for International Education (1992) de Wit, (p. 113)</td>
<td>…the whole range of processes by which higher education becomes less national and more internationally oriented.</td>
<td>Transnational level; process approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia Centre for International Education (BCCIE) Task Force (1993) de Wit, (p. 113)</td>
<td>…is a process that prepares the community for successful participation in an increasingly interdependent world […] The process should infuse all facets of the post-secondary education system, fostering global understanding and developing skills for effective living and working in a diverse world.</td>
<td>Institutional/national level. Process approach; holistic perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knight (1993) de Wit, (p. 113)</td>
<td>An international dimension is described as—a perspective, activity or program, which introduces or integrates an international/intercultural/global outlook into the major functions of a university or college.</td>
<td>Institutional level. Activities approach; holistic perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerr (1994) de Wit, (p. 112)</td>
<td>Internationalization of learning is divided into four components: the flow of new knowledge, the flow of scholars, the flow of students, and the content of curriculum.</td>
<td>Institutional level. Curriculum approach; elements as flows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education (IMHE), OECD (1994) de Wit, (p. 113)</td>
<td>The complex of processes whose combined effect, whether planned or not, is to enhance the international dimension of the experience of higher education in universities and similar educational institutions.</td>
<td>Institutional level. Process approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Definition of internationalisation</td>
<td>Focus</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>van der Wende (1996)</td>
<td>The process of curriculum development or curriculum change which is aimed at integrating an international dimension into the content of the curriculum, and, if relevant, also into the method of instruction.</td>
<td>Institutional/national level. Process perspective; emphasis in curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de Wit, (p. 115)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>van der Wande (1997)</td>
<td>Any systematic effort aimed at making higher education (more) responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalisation of societies, economy and labour markets. (pp. 18–19 original work; de Wit, 2002, p. 115)</td>
<td>National level; national policies; globalization; higher education and markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de Wit, (p. 115)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Callan (1998)</td>
<td>…is itself a portmanteau concept, must be understood as functioning in several distinct domains with their accompanying discourses: the examples given were the spheres of policy, of process, of expressions of educational value, and of social and occupational organization.</td>
<td>Multi-level, multi-domain/discourses: policy; process; values; social structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Callan, 2000, p. 18)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudzki (1998)</td>
<td>…a process of organizational change, curriculum innovation, staff development and student mobility for the purpose of attaining excellence in teaching, research and the other activities which universities undertake as part of their function.</td>
<td>Institutional level. Process of change and innovation approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de Wit, (p. 113)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schoorman (1999)</td>
<td>…an ongoing, counter-hegemonic educational process that occurs in an international context of knowledge and practice where societies are viewed as subsystems of a larger, inclusive world. The process of internationalization at an educational institution entails a comprehensive, multifaceted program of action that is integrated into all aspects of education.</td>
<td>Transnational level. Process approach; global interconnectedness; integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de Wit, (p. 112)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soderqvist (2001a, p. 29)</td>
<td>A change process from a national higher education institution to an international higher education institution leading to the inclusion of an international dimension in all aspects of its holistic management in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and to achieve the desired competencies.</td>
<td>Institutional level. Change process perspective; holistic management; quality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The concept of internationalisation continues to evolve and means different things to different countries or cultures (Jane Knight, 2004), but it is necessary for this research to adopt a definition that advances a common understanding (H. de Wit, 2001; Jane Knight, 2004). The common feature of these definitions is understanding and endorsing internationalisation as a process that integrates international and intercultural perspectives into not only the main functions of higher education institutions such as teaching, research, and service, but also into central elements such as goals, mission statements, programs and strategies of the institutions (Jane Knight, 1997; Jane Knight & De Wit, 1995).

In the second half of the 1960s, globalisation emerged as a cultural, political and economic phenomenon, and many researchers considered internationalisation of higher education in relation to globalisation. For example, Van der Wende (1997) state that internationalisation is a “systematic effort aimed at making higher education (more) responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalisation of societies, economy, and labour” (p. 19).
In the early 21st century, De Wit (2010) described internationalisation as “a process that integrates an international dimension or perspective into the major functions of the institution” (p. 10). A wide variety of academic programs, organisational structures and strategies are an integral part of this process. This approach is by far the most comprehensive. The process takes a great deal of coordination and effort to infuse an international dimension into every aspect of university life (H. de Wit, 2001).

According to Knight and DeWit (1995), internationalisation is a process including two strategies: organisation, which involves policies and administrative affairs, and planning, which involves academic services and activities. A list of elements of internationalisation has been developed by Knight (1994) and is shown in Table 2.4. Universities or colleges may be engaged in or consider these elements in their development of institutional internationalisation.
Table 2.4. List of Elements of Internationalisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Elements</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic activities and services</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work/study abroad (area recognised as one of the most important elements of internationalisation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International students</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty/staff exchange and mobility</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Foreign language study</td>
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<td></td>
<td>International development initiatives</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional cooperation agreements</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research with an international dimension</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Area studies/theme centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cross-cultural training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extra-curricular activities and institutional services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational factors</td>
<td>Expressed commitment by president and senior administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interest and involvement of faculty and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adequate funding allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International office</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expressed support by board of trustees</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication channels</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experienced personnel</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>External linkages</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policy statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual planning, budget and review process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decentralised/centralised approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interdisciplinary cooperation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Knight (J. Knight, 1994)

For Knight (1994), internationalisation has four approaches, activity, competency, ethos and process, as described below:

1. The activity approach explains internationalisation as being based on activities such as curriculum, student exchange, technical help and intercultural workshops.

2. The competency approach considers internationalisation to be based on “the development of new skills, knowledge, attitudes and values in students, faculty and staff” (J. Knight, 1997,p. 14).
3. The ethos approach explains internationalisation as being based on developing and advocating international or intercultural programs through the consideration of cultural affairs on campus.

4. The process approach is considered to be the best way to explain internationalisation (Jane Knight & De Wit, 1995). Knight (Jane Knight, 2003, 2004) observed internationalisation as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (p. 11).

![Diagram showing four approaches to internationalisation](image)

**Figure 2.2. Internationalisation approaches.**

Each approach to internationalisation has characteristics that distinguish it from the others, and all four approaches are not mutually exclusive and can be integrated to provide an overarching view of the internationalisation institutions (Hans de Wit, 1995). In this study, internationalised curriculum is measured by three concepts: approaches (i.e., organisation of the learning experiences), methods (i.e., how it is taught) and content (i.e., what is taught). Understanding these four approaches can provide further insights for investigating the internationalisation of the curriculum at RMIT University.
Back, Davis and Olsen were appointed by the (former) Australian Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs in 1996 to investigate and establish policy on internationalisation and higher education in Australia. They employed Knight’s (1994) definition of internationalisation and designed a conceptual framework based on the work of Knight and De Wit (1995). Subsequently, some Australian universities (Curtin University, Australian Catholic University and Griffith University) applied Knight’s (2004) definition. Knight (2004) proposes that internationalisation: “is the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (p. 11).

This definition is a revision of Knight’s (1994) previous definition. In the updated definition, terms such as “teaching, research and service functions” are replaced with “purpose, function and delivery” (Jane Knight, 2004). Knight (2004) argues that, as the use of the concept becomes more widely adopted, the variety and diversity of institutions adopting it increases and require a broader definition. In addition, Knight (2004) changed “institution” to “post-secondary education” and changed “multicultural” to “intercultural”. According to Knight (2004), internationalisation should make itself free from specific aspects, and instead it should move towards wider understanding of cultural affairs. Knight (2004) states that the new definition attempts to address the realities of today’s educational context where the national level of education is extremely important and therefore must be covered. The number and diversity of education providers that have very different interests and approaches to the international, intercultural and global dimensions are growing. Therefore, the more generic terms of purpose, function and delivery are used instead of the specific functional terms of teaching, research and service. By using these three more general terms, the proposed
definition can be relevant at the sector level, the institutional level and the variety of providers in the broad field of post-secondary education.

Based on the *RMIT Internationalisation Plan 2011–2015* for RMIT University, internationalisation is:

Ensuring RMIT develops, maintains and grows its capacity and capability to achieve its objectives for engagement with students, educators, researchers, alumni, industry, government and communities around the world. (RMIT Strategic Plan. 2011-2015, p. 3)

However, Knight (2004) suggests that institutions of higher education should incorporate global education initiatives not only through internationalised mission statements, strategic plans, human resources, policies and administrative systems, but also through the use of approaches related to academic programs, research, scholarly collaboration, external relations and extra-curricular activities.
Table 2.5. Approaches and Strategies for Internationalising Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approaches</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Academic programs                   | Student exchange programs  
|                                     | Foreign language study  
|                                     | Internationalised curricula  
|                                     | Area or thematic studies  
|                                     | Work/study abroad  
|                                     | International students  
|                                     | Teaching/learning process  
|                                     | Joint and double degree programs  
|                                     | Cross-cultural training  
|                                     | Faculty/staff mobility programs  
|                                     | Visiting lecturers and scholars  
|                                     | Link between academic programs and other strategies  |
| Research and scholarly collaboration| Areas and centres  
|                                     | Joint research projects  
|                                     | International conferences and seminars  
|                                     | Published articles and papers  
|                                     | International research agreements  
|                                     | Research exchange programs  |
| External relations                   | *Domestic:*  
|                                     | Community-based partnership and projects with nongovernment groups or public/private sector groups  
|                                     | Community-services and intercultural project work  
|                                     | *Cross-border:*  
|                                     | International development assistance projects  
|                                     | Cross-border delivery of education programs (commercial and non-commercial)  
|                                     | International linkages, partnerships, and networks  
|                                     | Contract-based training and research programs and services  
|                                     | Alumni-abroad programs  |
| Extra-curricular activities          | Student clubs and associations  
|                                     | International and intercultural campus events  
|                                     | Liaison with community-based cultural and ethnic groups  
|                                     | Peer support groups and programs  |

Source: (Jane Knight, 2004, pp.14-15)
Knight (1999) believes that academic programs are “perhaps closest to what is considered by many to be internationalisation activities” (p. 23); research and scholarly collaborations “address the substantive nature of the research, the methodology, the research collaborators and the distribution of the research/knowledge” (pp. 23–24); external relations and services appear to be “fundamentally changing in orientation and increasing in importance” (p. 25) and extracurricular activities can internationalise “the total educational experience of both domestic and international students and help to bring a comparative perspective to the classroom” (p. 25).

As will be discussed in Chapter 3, all of the strategies that Knight (2004) identifies for internationalising institutions have been deliberately applied by RMIT University and these underpin the questionnaire used in this study. Examining different definitions of internationalisation allows researchers to understand that internationalisation is a response to international studies and includes international as well as local (intercultural) factors. Internationalisation and its many benefits for students, faculties, institutions and society in general can be the cause for RMIT University as an internationalised university with the wide range of courses, programs and curricula offered, which must be continuously updated according to current developments. RMIT University courses are constantly updated to meet the changing needs of business and the broader community, and to provide students with specialised content to ensure professional and personal success in a rapidly changing world (www.rmit.com.au).
2.7. The Components of Internationalisation

The different definitions of internationalisation have led to the identification of a variety of components to internationalisation. A general overview of definitions shows that the different components are very important to the process of internationalisation. These components are explained in a number of different ways.

Arum and Van de Water (1992) divided the components of internationalisation into three groups: international content of the curriculum, international movement of students in relation to research and training, and international cooperation and assistance. Ellingboe (1998) expanded the list to the following six components of internationalisation in an educational atmosphere:

1. College leadership
2. Faculty members’ international relationship with colleges, research centres and institutions around the world
3. The curriculum
4. The availability, affordability, and transferability of overseas programs for students
5. The presence and adaptation of international students, researchers, and visiting faculty members into campus life
6. International co-curricular centres (student unions, career centres, cultural immersion and language centres, student organisations; p. 205).

According to Ellingboe (1998), internationalisation can be achieved if the curriculum, approaches, programs and policies of universities integrate an international perspective into a university or college system. Mestenhauser (2002) attempted to extend Ellingboe’s
observation of internationalisation by adding two more components: budget and resource allocation and controlling and assessing the procedure.

Nilsson (2003) also suggests six components including an internationalised curriculum, study overseas for staff and students, development programs for staff and students, faculty international activities, bilingualism among staff and students, and an internationalisation at home program. For Nilsson (2003), internationalisation at home was a novel aspect of internationalisation. Nilsson’s (2003) two major components of internationalisation are internationalisation at home and cross-border education. The first component includes the aspects of education that help both local and international students to develop skills and knowledge without leaving their country (Jane Knight, 2003, 2005; Nilsson, 2003). The second component includes teachers, students, scholars or institutions crossing national jurisdictional borders (Van der Wende, 2007).

In summary, the components that are considered to be the most influential contributors to internationalisation in academic settings are an international curriculum, foreign languages, studying an overseas curriculum, the presence of international students, international relations and cooperation with other universities (Aigner, Nelson, & Stimpfl, 1992; Audas, 1991; Francis, 1993; Harari, 1989; J. Knight, 1994; J. A. Mestenhauser, 2002; Paige, 2005; R. A. Scott, 1994). The rationales and strategies of internationalisation are discussed in Section 2.8 to provide a comprehensive understanding of internationalisation.

2.8. Rationale for Internationalisation

There are a number of different rationales used to explain internationalisation in higher education. Scott (1994) observed the following seven rationales for urging institutions of
higher education to be more international: economic competitiveness, environmental interdependence, developing ethnic and religious diversity of local societies, the fact that a number of citizens work for foreign-owned companies, the impact of international trade on small businesses, the reality that graduate students will have supervisors of different racial and ethnic groups than their own, and national security and peaceful connections between nations.

According to Davies (1992), internationalisation is closely linked with financial reduction, the rise of academic entrepreneurialism and genuine philosophical commitment to cross-cultural perspectives in the advancement and dissemination of knowledge (p. 177). In addition, Warner (1992) describes the following three rational models for internationalisation:

1. The liberal model identifying the initial objective of internationalisation as self-development in universal education.
2. The competitive model introducing international curriculum and activities of campus life that can make institutions, students and countries more competitive.
3. The social transformation model suggesting the major purpose of internationalisation is to give students a comprehensive understanding of international and intercultural issues regarding equality and justice, and then gives them the instruments to work critically and actively toward social transformation.

Aigner (1992) also outlines three rationales for internationalisation of higher education: developing international security, maintaining economic competitiveness and promoting communication between nations.

According to Knight (1997), Canadian higher education acknowledges internationalisation as an important issue for many reasons including preparing students and scholars who will be internationally knowledgeable, maintaining competitiveness, achieving
international standards, encouraging scholarship, considering national and international problems, presenting educational services, considering social changes, appreciating the ethnic and cultural diversity of nations, generating income for educational centres, and maintaining international security and peaceful relations.

Furthermore, according to Knight (2004), there are four rationales for internationalisation:

1. Cultural and social rationales are involved in national and cultural identity, citizenship development, intercultural understanding and social development.

2. Political rationales consider peace, national security and mutual understanding through the recruitment of international students and an emphasis on national identity.

3. Economic rationales consider the short-term and long-term financial motivations. The internationalisation of higher education contributes to the skilled human resources required for the labour market, economic development and competitiveness.

4. Academic rationales consider international academic standards by adding an international aspect to the act of teaching and doing research. It also involves quality development of the higher education system.

These categorisations of rationales have several common points, and this indicates the importance of these subjects. For instance, Scott (1994) identifies economic competitiveness, developing ethnic and religious diversity of local societies, and national security and peaceful connections between nations, which are similar to the rationales that Knight (2004) identifies.
in her study: economic (economic growth and competitiveness), cultural (intercultural understanding and national cultural identity) and political concerns (national security).

These rationales are manifested in the RMIT University vision where RMIT University will focus on creating solutions that transform the future for the benefit of people (cultural rationale) and their environments (social rationale). RMIT University will collaborate with partners to ensure the global impact of its education and research (academic rationale) and will reach out through its presence in cities across the world to make a difference (political and economic rationales). This vision can lead RMIT University to its goals, which are:

- **Global** in attitude, action and presence, offering students a global passport to learning and work
- **Urban** in orientation and creativity, shaping sustainable cities and drawing inspiration from the challenges and opportunities they provide
- **Connected** through active partnerships with professions, industries and organisations to support the quality, reach and impact of education and research.
Table 2.6. Existing Rationales of Internationalisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rationales</th>
<th>Subcategories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social/Cultural</td>
<td>National Cultural Identity, Intercultural Understanding, Citizenship Development, Social Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Foreign Policy, National Security, Technical Assistance, Peace And Mutual Understanding, National Identity, Regional Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Economic Growth And Competitiveness, Labour Market, Financial Incentives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>International Dimension To Research And Teaching, Institution Building, Profile And Status, Enhancement Of Quality, International Academic Standards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Knight (Jane Knight, 2004, p. 23)

Knight (2003) points out that the International Association of Universities has determined four rationales: competitiveness, strategic alliances, human resource capacity and international cooperation. Nowadays, there are international relationships between universities. Universities often strike alliances to stay in competition in the higher educational market. For instance, the University of Melbourne and Monash University drew up an alliance to extend their competitiveness and influence (Maslen, 1997). According to Neal (1988), “Colleges and universities have more leverage when they address common issues and concerns together” (p. 15).
Strategic alliances can have goals such as academic mobility, benchmarking, joint program development, curriculum, conferences and seminars, and joint research initiatives (Jane Knight, 2004). According to Knight (2004), developing strategic, international and educational alliances is “not so much an end unto itself but a means to achieving academic, scientific, economic, technological, or cultural objectives” (p. 27).

Based on Longman’s *Advanced American Dictionary* (as cited in Liargovas & Skandalis, 2005), competitiveness is “the ability of a company or a product to compete with others and the desire to be more successful than other people” (p. 278). Competitiveness is the ability of companies, industries and organisations to stay in competition, which in turn ensures their ability to develop or protect their circumstances in relation to active competitors in the same market. The competitiveness of a company is its ability to function better than other companies in sales, market share or profitability (Lall, 2001). I will discuss competitiveness regarding students as customers, before considering the university as an enterprise that has the potential to produce money. I will suggest that universities should observe the significance of their competitors in the market to be more compatible by considering internationalisation. International cooperation should also be considered through goods and services providers to provide the possibility of bilateral knowledge for a bright future. Moreover, recruiting human resources from an international market can be considered as another rationale for internationalisation of organisation.

Based on the RMIT University’s *Strategic Plan 2011–2015*, the main rationale for internationalisation at RMIT is “Global in attitude, action and presence, offering students a global passport to learning and work” (p. 9). To fulfil the RMIT University vision, the
university should create connections with professions, firms and organisations to improve the quality and develop the impact of its research (RMIT University, 2015).

2.9. Strategies for Internationalisation

When a higher education institution attempts internationalisation, management should set goals for higher education and present potential measures to achieve those goals. Although the strategies for internationalisation differ between institutions (Aigner et al., 1992; Tan, 2003) and scholars have suggested different strategies, there are some common strategies that have been identified by several researchers and are employed by higher education institutions worldwide. These strategies are internationalised curricula, student exchange programs recruiting international students, encouraging study overseas, work and internship abroad programs, faculty and staff mobility programs, and international publications (Francis, 1993; Harari, 1989; Harman, 2005; Henson & Noel, 1989; Holzner & Greenwood, 1995; J. Knight, 1997; Lian, 2003; McKellin, 1998).

In addition, Engberg and Green (2002) observed the following strategies that are common to many institutions: establishing internationalisation as a goal, encouraging study overseas by providing financial support and enhancing new partnerships with international universities, increasing the number of international students on campus, internationalising the curriculum, rewarding faculty achievements in internationalisation by considering faculty exchange programs and research, considering foreign language proficiency as a requirement for graduation.

Davies (1992), in his study of university strategies for internationalisation, identified several key elements that need to be considered if institutions are to internationalise their
campuses. These elements are development of a clear mission statement to guide the university’s internationalisation efforts; decisions about the types and purposes of programs the institutions should operate to maintain a central focus on internationalisation; faculty development, which is an essential to the delivery of international programs (because the skills, knowledge and attitude of the academics can make a direct impact on the delivery); and the location of internal or external sources for the funding of programs and activities. In addition, Knight and De Wit (1995) state that to be considered an internationalised university, these strategies should be underpinned by a permanent organisational commitment and structure. They argue that internationalisation needs to be entrenched into the culture, policy, planning and organisation processes of the institution so that it is not marginalised or treated as a passing fad. RMIT University has its own strategies for internationalisation, with a variety of strategies for internationalisation having been produced by researchers. The data related to internationalisation was provided by RMIT University’s Survey Service Centre from students (local and international) and is an opportunity for RMIT University to upgrade itself and find its position in the international context. An institution’s history, context, goals, mission, values and resources should be considered for internationalisation (Harari, 1992; Jane Knight, 2004; Schoorinan, 1999). As a means to achieve internationalisation, Harari (1992) identified the following twelve strategies:

1. Infusing disciplinary courses with international content
2. Establishing comparative approaches in teaching and research
3. Establishing issue-oriented approaches and interdisciplinary research
4. Establishing area studies and civilisation methods
5. Establishing international and intercultural studies
6. Establishing international development studies (theory and practice)

7. Considering the role of foreign languages as an essential part of the internationalisation of undergraduate studies

8. Considering the internationalisation of pre-professional studies and professional schools

9. Considering faculty and staff development and doing research in the international arena

10. Creating institutional connections and universal networking of scholars

11. Considering the involvement of students who have studied overseas as well as international students in the international enrichment of the curriculum and the campus

12. Considering the involvement of students and faculty in internships, research, and other activities in internationally oriented businesses and other industries at home and abroad (p. 59).

RMIT University, through the Survey Service Centre, distributes a questionnaire to students that asks questions related to internationalisation, student satisfaction about service quality. RMIT University has identified eight strategies of internationalisation to develop RMIT University’s capacity worldwide. The strategies involved in the *RMIT Internationalisation Plan 2011–2015* are as follows:

1. Developing global campuses, networks, and partnerships, and supporting the planned universal growth in student enrolments as well as student mobility

2. Enhancing global education through a quality assured globalised curriculum

3. Ensuring students’ experience is comparable across RMIT program locations
4. Providing opportunities for student mobility.
5. Participating in RMIT’s global research aspirations
6. Establishing a globally connected network of industry and alumni contacts
7. Supporting and assisting staff to achieve RMIT’s global goals
8. Improving RMIT strategies, policies and culture of internationalisation, underpinning RMIT’s global growth initiatives (p. 3).

Several important strategies can make or change the outlook of higher education internationalisation in any educational setting. One strategy is internationalisation of the curriculum, which attempts to make curricula with a wider international scope. It is also important to know how a strategic plan can be achieved. As Moore and Diamond (2000) point out, a strategic plan is successful when it has influenced all areas of operations and has become part of the institution’s philosophy and culture. RMIT University has a strategic plan that draws on the circumstances of its history to facilitate a holistic integration of internationalisation. RMIT University has a history of bringing knowledge to people from many countries, cultures and backgrounds as well as a history of working in partnership with professions, industries and organisations in education and research, and an attachment to the cities in which its campuses have developed (rmit.com.au).

2.10. Internationalised Curricula

Some researchers believe that curriculum is the most influential factor in internationalisation of higher education (Bond, 2003; Burn, 2002; Ellingboe, 1998; Knight, 2000; J. A. Mestenhauser, 1998; Paige, 2003). According to Print (1993) curriculum is “all the planned learning opportunities offered to learners by the educational institution and the
experiences learners encounter when the curriculum is implemented” (p. 9). According to Curro and McTaggart (2003), curriculum is “a theoretical plan for learning and curriculum implies the educational relationships envisaged among teachers and learners” (p. 1). In addition, Green (2005) observes that curriculum is the most influential means for international learning. Internationalising the curriculum is therefore a significant strategy for the internationalisation of higher education (Gale, 1997; Rizvi, 2000b).

Based on several definitions of curriculum, Elkin, Devjee & Farnsworth (2005) conclude that curriculum is ideas (content) and ways of engaging with ideas (processes). This leads to a definition of curriculum that could include activities that are outside or alongside the formal education process. Travel and engagement with other cultures can be included when study of a foreign language and living in another culture could also be added to this definition. Several studies have considered curriculum as everything at school. For example, in Keitel’s (1986) study, students are considered as the raw material of a factory in where graduate students are the end product. He concludes that the curriculum is everything that brings about the change from raw material (students) to end product (graduates). Further to this, Oliva (1994) argues that curriculum is everything that exists in the school, including everything that teachers communicate to students (Haack, 2008). Antone (2001) concludes that curriculum is more than all these because, in fact, curriculum is the whole of life.

Knight and De Wit (1995) did not provide a standard definition of curriculum internationalisation and they used the terms internationalisation and internationalisation of the curriculum interchangeably. Internationalising the curriculum is affected by different kinds of factors including cultural exchange, foreign language training, curriculum development,
courses with international content and courses that facilitate understanding of other national contexts (Cassell, 2007; H. de Wit, 2001; DeLong et al., 2009; Leask, 2001).

According to Bremer and Van der Wende (1995), internationalised curricula have “an international orientation in content, aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally/socially) in an international and multicultural context, and designed for domestic students as well as international students” (IDP, 1995, p. 1). They presented the following typologies for internationalised curricula:

1. Curricula considering an international content
2. Curricula preparing students for international professions
3. The content designed for international students
4. Curricula involving an internationally comparative method
5. Interdisciplinary programs investigating regions instead of single country
6. The study of foreign languages providing training in intercultural communications skills and addressing cross-cultural communication issues
7. Curricula leading to joint or double degrees
8. Curricula offered at offshore institutions by local faculty (Bremer & van der Wende, 1995).

These typologies have provided criteria that can be used to identify and categorise internationalised curricula in the university based on their defining characteristics. This is an “indicator of the multidimensional nature of international education” (J. A. Mestenhauser, 1998, p. 82). In practice, any of the above-mentioned features could operate with each other.

Universities with an internationalised curriculum can create and maintain an attractive environment that can be interesting and useful for both local and international students. An
internationalised curriculum values alternative insights and perspectives and allows the influence of voices from different cultures and ethnicities to inform new response to Australian education. In addition, Haigh (2002) observed that:

Internationalisation of the curriculum is originally the process of designing a curriculum that meets the needs of an international student body. Ultimately, the process is about “fair play.” The ideal international curriculum provides equably for the learning ambitions of all students, irrespective of their national, ethnic, cultural, social class/caste or gender identities. It values social inclusion, cultural pluralism and ‘world citizenship’ ahead of partisan links to any smaller geographical, cultural or social unit. (p. 51)

Based on the previously mentioned definitions of internationalised curriculum, several studies have considered the international or intercultural contents of the curriculum. However, some studies have also considered the significance of pedagogy in the internationalised curriculum, and have shown that content as well as pedagogy have significant roles in the success of an internationalised curriculum (Jane Knight, 2004). Curriculum should consider not only the content but also the way the content is presented to the students. Teekens (2000) noted that, “it is the lecturer who is the core player in the process; it is her or his teaching that ultimately determine the results in the international classroom” (p. 30). Teekens (2000) identifies the need for particular skills, knowledge and attitudes to successfully present the internationalised curriculum. Effective teaching and learning strategies make a curriculum more interesting for students who come from different cultures and add international and intercultural values to both international and local students in the class (Back et al., 1997; Bell,
Other studies have considered pedagogical issues in international classrooms and tried to discover strategies by which the lecturers could help international students. Ryan and Hellmundt (2003) state that those issues comprise “the format and speed of lecturers; the use of unfamiliar concepts, expressions, and anecdotes in class; the need for carefully constructed group discussion; and the use of tasks that invite and value different perspectives” (pp. 4–5). Haigh (2002) states, “the flexible styles of student-constructed, student-centred learning leave greater scope for pluralism than conventional didactic instruction” (p. 58). He pointed to examples such as the use of the internet, emails, teleconferences, multimedia and foreign magazines to encourage communication between domestic and international students to explore different views.

Curro and McTaggart (2003) suggested strategies including “using correct pronunciations; deliberate questioning of students from other cultures to sample different perspectives; and nurturing collaborative learning practices for deep learning and cross-cultural critiques” (p. 6). Humans learn best when in a relationship with others who share a common practice (Wheatley, 2005, P. 172). Further to this, Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) in their definition of communities of practice state that, “Learning is a social experience, in groups, people (students) can share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (p. 4).

Bremer and Van der Wende’s (1995) work presents a definition that is favoured by Australian universities such as Flinders University, University of Queensland (W. Green &
Mertova, 2009), University of Southern Queensland (Galligan, 2008) and Victoria University (Woodley & Pearce, 2007). Their definition of an internationalised curriculum is:

Curricula with an international orientation in content, aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally/socially) in an international and multicultural context, and designed for domestic students and/or international students. (p. 10)

This definition gained prominence because it described internationalisation as more than just a professional or academic concept. It also considers internationalisation as a social concept and suggests that internationalisation should teach skills that go beyond those of a professional nature by preparing students socially for an international stage. The University of Queensland and Flinders University have argued that because of the huge number of international students enrolled, and given that a significant number of local students were born outside Australia with different backgrounds and cultures, it is important to adequately recognise the diverse nature of the student population and to prepare them for their international and multicultural graduate destinations. The universities’ curricula needed to be internationalised, and they chose Bremer and Van der Wende’s (1995) definition as a comprehensive definition of internationalisation. For Victoria University, this definition provides a basis for defining the internationalising of curricula at Victoria University and a working party will be convened to further refine this definition to ensure that it reflects Victoria University’s approach to internationalisation (Victoria University, 2011).

By reviewing Knight’s (2002) definition of internationalisation as “a process of integrating an international dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of an institution of higher education, with the aim of strengthening international education”, I can conclude that curriculum can include everything at a university that can help students to
achieve their goals; it can encompass content, services and facilities. However, the Knight (2002) definition of internationalisation of curricula extends the scope of internationalisation beyond students and curriculum to include staff as well as the research and service functions of the institution. This definition implies that internationalisation is intrinsic to the whole institution. Based on the RMIT Internationalisation Plan 2011–2015, the RMIT University curriculum is internationalised due to its concern for the international delivery of RMIT University programs and the international careers of its graduates. The RMIT Internationalisation Plan 2011–2015 involves eight preferences (which I have mentioned in the previous section) such as developing global campuses, partnerships and networks; supporting the planned universal growth in student enrolment and mobility; enhancing universal education by a quality assured globalised curriculum; assuring the student experience is comparable across RMIT University program areas; participating in RMIT University’s global research; and creating a globally connected network between industry and universities.

RMIT University has three campuses in Melbourne and two in Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi). Over the years, RMIT University has established a large network of key regional and international institutions and businesses through linkages and collaborations in its activities. RMIT University’s key partners include APEC Business Advisory Council, Asian Development Bank, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Treasury Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the World Bank, ASEAN Secretariat Association of Development Financing Institutions in the Asia Pacific, Asian Development Bank Institute. These falls into four categories: universities and research centres, international organisations, government, and industry. One key benefit of these partnerships is
that students can do their internships and placements through these companies and organisations. Some students have chosen RMIT University as their university of choice because of this opportunity. International students are not always familiar with these companies and organisations, and the university is responsible for helping to find organisations or companies for student placements and internships.

Walker (2011) states that research has shown the benefits of internship programs for universities and businesses involved in internships. Students benefit from higher salaries; improved critical thinking skills; being better prepared for their careers; relating the classroom to real-world experiences; enhanced time management, communication, and self-discipline skills; and higher job satisfaction upon graduation, all of which are necessary for working in an international context. Universities benefit through increased recruiting and reputation and through better relationships with the business community, which can all lead to increased support through new scholarships, equipment and grant funding. Businesses benefit by having a source of qualified, low-cost, motivated workers and a pool of qualified candidates for future full-time jobs. Based on student involvement and academic and social integration theories, student retention and persistence to graduation should increase for students who have taken internships and placement. A well-structured internship should increase student involvement as well as increase academic and social integration, and should lead to increased retention, persistence, and degree completion (Walker, 2011).

A study conducted by Kedia and Daniel (2003) demonstrates the demand for corporate employees with international competency, including international knowledge and skills in foreign languages. The globalised world spurs the creation and development of internationally oriented jobs that drive the growing need for foreign language skills,
intercultural skills and international knowledge. Kedia and Daniel (2003) have found that a vast majority of companies agreed that increased international expertise of their staff would increase their overall business, either somewhat or a great deal. Professionals who demonstrate proficiency in a foreign language as well as knowledge and skills in another professional area acquire a competitive advantage in their international careers (Grosse, 2004; Inman, 1987). According to Punteney (2012), there is no doubt that many of today’s students have a keen interest in working internationally and in participating in educational opportunities to develop their global competencies. As a result of these mutual needs and demands, there is a role for RMIT University to prepare students for international professions. Within the context of meeting students’ expectations, institutions of higher education are under pressure to prepare their graduates for the new reality of global interconnectedness (Norris & Gillespie, 2009).

Van Hoof (2000) believes that internships provide industries with alternative sources of labour, especially in times of growing labour shortages. He also states that work placements can lead to a career for students and are a means for a company to test a potential candidate for future employment. According to Cannon and Arnold (1998), international students see the internship less as a supplement to course work and more “as a separate component of their preparation for the job market, one that is becoming more essential in gaining post-college employment” (p. 204). The opportunity to gain practical experience during study is considered critical to international graduates’ employment prospects, both in Australia and elsewhere. To ensure that the student experience is comparable across program areas, RMIT University provides a procedure for University-wide systematic collection, analysis and reporting of course-level student feedback. Standard RMIT University course experience surveys for
higher education and vocational education and training have been developed by the Survey Services Centre in consultation with stakeholders. The teaching staff is advised that the standard course experience survey is to be administered each time a course is delivered so that student feedback can be captured and reported.

By choosing to be a university of technology and design, RMIT takes some of the aspirations expressed at its foundation and expands them by self-consciously shaping its education and research to build expertise in technology and design on a global scale. This is achieved by stamping its educational experience and its research approach as synthetic, partnered, action and solution-directed, as well as by considering the quality and the impact of its education and research in transforming lives and environments.

In addition to internationalising the curriculum, recruitment of international students is a significant issue for the internationalisation of higher education worldwide. Given that the success of a business depends on customer satisfaction, universities should explore approaches to meet the needs of their students. International students want to find out whether an internationalised curriculum provides them with a special learning setting and increases their chances for academic success. When international students are recruited, the institution is in charge of managing the students’ expectations and considering the academic challenges they might face. The institution is also in charge of the tenets, rationale and strategies underlying internationalising the curriculum. These policies can increase service quality, satisfaction and student retention, and they can lead to a positive presentation of the institution.
2.11. Student Satisfaction

Higher education providers have become industrialised. Eagle and Brennan (2007) point out that, “students in higher education are expected to pay an increasing share of the costs of their tuition, so there is an increasing tendency to refer to students as customers” (p. 44).

Individuals have only limited control over their choice of university and the selection mechanism consists of three stages (Bratti, 2002). In the first stage, individuals choose the universities they wish to apply to; in the second stage, universities make their admission choices; and in the third stage, after students are offered places, they decide at which institution to enrol. All three stages are dependent on the second stage because, although every student can submit an application to each university, it is the university that selects the students based on their educational qualifications (Collier & Mayer, 1986). Therefore, it is the university that decides which students can study in the university.

Factors such as parents or guardians, friends, financial assistance, reputation of the academic program, program availability, and location of the institutions have repeatedly surfaced as being the most influential for students when making a choice of a college or university (Dixon & Martin, 1991; Galotti & Mark, 1994; Hu & Hossler, 2000; Sevier, 1993). Studies on the impact of college tuition costs and financial aid awards on student college choice are prevalent in the higher education literature (McPherson, Schapiro, & Winston, 1993; Mumper, 1996; Weiler, 1996) and demonstrate the importance of the issue.
Regarding students as consumers has become a widely accepted view (Chadwick & Ward, 1987; Christensen & Philbrick, 1993; Franklin & Shemwell, 1995) and has been discussed in the literature from different perspectives. According to Oswald (1997), viewing students as customers is logical because they receive educational services from their universities.

Satisfaction is an important factor in the persistence and retention of students (Kearney & Kearney, 1994; Spicuzza, 1992; Wince & Borden, 1995). In a competitive market atmosphere, dissatisfied students are likely to be less motivated during their study, and this can lead to them changing their study program or even the abandoning their study (Tuomi, Aimala, Plazar, Starčič, & Žvanut, 2013). Giannousi, Vernadakis, Derri, Michalopolous, and Kioumourtzoglou (2009) note that satisfied students are more likely to be motivated to accomplish their academic goals and less likely to drop out. In addition, satisfied students will recommend the institution to their friends and family, and hopefully contribute financially to the institution in the future (Pate, 1993).

Satisfaction with higher education depends on many factors which includes how the person adjusts to the new environment (Witt & Handal, 1984), job satisfaction analogies (Betz, 1969), integration (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Tinto, 1986), involvement (Astin, 1985) and quality of life (Benjamin & Hollings, 1995).

According to Oliver (1993), in the expectancy–disconfirmation paradigm, people entertain expectations or predictions about the process and result of a service. Satisfaction research uses the expectancy–disconfirmation paradigm that is based on the works of Olshavsky and Miller (1972), who considered the theory of positive disconfirmation, and Anderson (1973), who discussed the relationship between marketing promotional activity,
consumer expectations and consumer satisfaction. The expectancy–disconfirmation theory includes four elements (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982):

1. **Expectations:** It is supposed that consumers predict the performance of goods/services in the pre-purchase stage. Different kinds of expectation have been considered, but the taxonomy of better versus worse is incredibly influential in the tradition of satisfaction research (Oliver, 1980).

2. **Performance:** In a post-purchase condition, the consumer often assesses the performance of the goods and services. The performance is regarded as a standard for evaluating the original expectation.

3. **Disconfirmation:** This is an influential step in making comparison between pre-purchase expectations and post-purchase performance understandings. The consumer makes a comparison between the primary expectation and the authentic performance and might achieve one of the three following outcomes:
   a. Positive confirmation where goods or services perform as expected, leading to medium satisfaction.
   b. Negative disconfirmation where goods or services do not perform as expected leading to dissatisfaction.
   c. Positive disconfirmation where goods or services perform better than expected (i.e. a negative expectation is disconfirmed), leading to satisfaction.

4. **Satisfaction:** Is the result of the interaction between expectation formation, performance perception and the comparison of both (disconfirmation). Thus, the relative power of either the disconfirmation or the formed expectations affects the degree of satisfaction.
Expectation and disconfirmation are different, and each can affect satisfaction separately (Oliver, 1977). Higher or lower expectations lead to the higher or lower satisfaction judgments, and “positive discontinuations enhance a satisfaction judgment, while the disappointment of a negative disconfirmation decreases it” (B. Oliver, Bibik, Chandler, & Lane, 1988, p. 496).

A number of studies have investigated satisfaction and service quality. Many of these studies attempt to confirm the original models, but it has been observed that the models should be enhanced and modified with additional variables to fully describe the satisfaction response (Archambault, 2008). Earlier studies considered the approaches through which the key variables were modified, whereas later studies have developed the perception of the fundamental aspects and additional factors contributing to the satisfaction response (R. L. Oliver, 1980, 1993; R. L. Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988).

Oliver (1980) attempted to widen the scope of the determinants of satisfaction by linking the satisfaction response to attitude formation and measurement. Based on the understanding that satisfaction has a cognitive as well as an affective component, Oliver (1980) considers the concept of satisfaction in relation to attitudes that have a strong cognitive component and an affective component. With this link, Oliver also connects satisfaction to post-purchase behaviour intentions. In particular, Oliver links the expectancy–disconfirmation theory to Fishbein’s (1967) attitude model.

Oliver and Desarbo (1988) have also considered social determinants as contextual stimuli using the theories of equity and attribution in addition to traditional parameters such as expectation, performance and disconfirmation. Through considering equity and attribution theories in the theoretical framework of satisfaction, Oliver (1993) considers that the basic framework is insufficient to describe an exchange relationship. While equity theory considers
the fairness of the dyadic relationship, attribution theory explains the locus of control or the potential power asymmetries of the dyadic relationship (variable vs. constant, internal vs. external, controllable vs. uncontrollable). Comparisons of performance with pre-purchase expectations as well as perceptions of interaction or exchange fairness can determine satisfaction.

Oliver and DeSarbo (1988) have considered the idea of stylistic preferences in the formation of satisfaction. This means that individual consumers might show satisfaction based on questions of fairness, or the comparison of expectations with perceptions. Oliver and Desarbo (1988) agree that factors, such as expectations, performance, disconfirmation, equity and attribution, influence the satisfaction response. They also suggest that stylistic differences might be seen between individual consumers. They have empirically shown that individuals cluster around preferred modes of satisfaction processing.

Oliver (1993) suggests that individuals’ particular affective parameters might affect satisfaction judgment and that the condition, the product or service attribute or person-specific variables might also identify which parameters affect the prediction of satisfaction. Consequently, Oliver (1977) represents the last 20 years of satisfaction research in a comprehensive model of satisfaction. He has taken satisfaction out of an isolated context and has developed it into a consumption processing model that attempts to blend “the variety of human experience” (Oliver, 1977, p. 480). This model of satisfaction response assumes cognitive information theory as the basic theory and incorporates the diverse research traditions in the fields of need fulfilment, quality, cognitive dissonance, equity, post-purchase regret, attribution and emotion to describe the satisfaction response, attitude formation, loyalty and post-purchase responses (both long-term and short-term). In other words, an individual
gets involved in a purchase with a positive or a negative mindset and will leave with satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Positive actions of international students as customers of RMIT University will play an important role in their satisfaction. Thomas and Galambos (2004) claim that the characterisation of students as consumers of higher education means that the satisfaction of students becomes extremely important to the success of the institution because higher education institutions share the same intensely competitive and sensitive marketing environment. Further to this, Astin (1993) believes that student satisfaction was one of the most direct measures of success in college, deserving to be measured alongside all other important educational outcomes.

Universities need to be very well informed about the political, economic, social and cultural issues of the countries from which they draw their international students. As Maringe (2006) explains, a useful way to gain an understanding of the recruitment of international students is to have a clear understanding of the choice of intending applicants. Knowing the reasons applicants choose universities and courses of study is central to developing institutional positioning in an increasingly competitive higher education environment.

Marketing tactics are used by organisations and companies to gain more customers. International students in this study were conscious of these tactics and strategies. For example, Maringe (2006) found that people and prospectus elements do not have a great influence on the choices students make about where to study for their higher education. This is an indictment on institutions that spend huge sums in advertisements and promotion activities to lure students.
Bennet (2006) suggests that universities may need to consider other ways to promote themselves to the recruitment market. For example, one university in the South (Maringe, 2006) has developed a student ambassador program in which every applicant is paired to a trained current student who helps to answer any questions the applicant may have from the moment of inquiry to registration. Bennet (2006) finds that as a result of this initiative, the university has increased its applicant retention capacity four fold.

Maringe (2006) suggests that universities should play to their strengths or situate themselves around aspects in which they can become excellent. Positioning involves three elements: developing an institutional brand or image, deciding on the market segments to serve and developing a communication strategy that accentuates the institutional capability to deliver to this market. An institution of higher education needs to research its own image characteristics and fit them to the characteristics that potential students are seeking (Kotler & Murphy, 1981; Smith & Cavusgil, 1984; Williams, 1986). According to Martin (1996), a good fit university ultimately results in students who are satisfied with their institution and reach graduation (retention).

According to Saich (2005), a poor choice of university has long-term implications and stems from unfulfilled or mismatched student expectations of the institution and disappointment of staff in the students they have admitted. According to the principle of word-of-mouth advertising, this is not good for the university and its reputation. As McGrath and Braunstein (1997) conclude, negative impressions of fellow students increase the likelihood of first-year students dropping out. In a similar vein, Williams (1986) claims that an inaccurate choice-set increases the risk of the student choosing the
wrong institution, becoming dissatisfied with the institution and subsequently withdrawing.

A good university experience can be considered as an advantage because after graduation, the students realise that the university was better than they had expected. Oliver (1980) argues that satisfaction is characterised by the surprise a customer experiences after a purchase and that this surprise eventually becomes an input to a less dynamic attitude. Consequently, satisfaction can be considered to influence the customer’s evaluation of service quality, purchase intentions and behaviour (LaBarbera & Mazursky, 1983). Satisfaction can also have positive disconfirmation when goods or services perform better than what it was expected (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982).

In a competitive academic market, individuals seek institutions presenting a differential or competitive benefit. Students (i.e., customers) are co-producers of the service (Kotze & Du Plessis, 2003). This idea has been presented in previous marketing research, (Hennig-Thurau, Langer, & Hansen, 2001; Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996) and represents a novel view of the importance of student involvement as a customer in the service presented to him or her by the institution.

A significant benefit to service providers is the delivery of quality service to customers. Students are often seen as the higher education institution’s customers, but some studies have refused to see student as customers. According to Svensson and Wood (2007), it is not appropriate to see students as customers because of the many issues related to the implications of the marketing metaphor. Observing students as customers gives students the right to criticism and redress. Most complaints focus on issues such as the rigor of homework, examinations and the grade that the student obtains.
Although students have the right to complain about some issues, they do not have the knowledge and experience to decide on academic assessment. Through course or faculty assessments, higher education institutions give students the opportunity to evaluate their lecturers and course delivery, even though students might have no knowledge of teaching methods in higher education settings (Svensson & Wood, 2007). Svensson and Wood (2007) assume that purchasing a degree is different from purchasing goods or services because students must meet the satisfaction of the higher education institution before graduation. Higher education is a unique form of service involving participation, commitment and relationships that are intrinsic as well as extrinsic to the institution.

Through activities such as involvement, participation, and physical presence at the point of service, students are regarded as an integral part of the service delivery system because they are co-producers of their education and not just passive recipients of educational services in a higher education setting (Kotze & Du Plessis, 2003). According to Kotze and Du Plessis (2003), effective student co-production leads to service quality as a desired outcomes of the service.

A number of studies have addressed students’ perspectives of service quality in higher education (Gatfield et al., 1999; House, 1999). To gather information about student experiences, RMIT University’s Survey Service Centre is part of the Policy and Planning Group of RMIT University. The Survey Service Centre’s aim is to provide comprehensive, accurate and timely analysis of students at RMIT University. This assists RMIT University in improving the quality of learning and teaching, and in improving service and in-staff development. Surveys are important mechanisms for monitoring and improving students’
experiences in RMIT University’s teaching and learning environments, particularly asking students about their learning, teaching and campus environment experiences.

According to Wright (1996), students’ understanding of higher education is increasingly important since institutes have become more student-oriented. Wright employed the methodology of Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985, 1988) to and studied current students to demonstrate the quality criteria related to education and also considered the quality of education from the students’ point of view. Hill (1995) has found that students’ expectations were stable over the years; this means that they formed their expectations before their arrival at the institution. Simultaneously, the students had a consciousness that their experiences were unstable over time. Hill also observes that higher education organisations should manage students’ expectations from enrolment to graduation.

In higher education, the student is regarded as a short-term customer who follows his or her studies. The student may choose to extend his or her presence at that institute if it offers postgraduate degrees, and this extension of study can also be called retention. Strong customer-oriented or student-centred institutes attract more students by nurturing positive experiences.

2.12. Student Retention

Student retention is defined as continuous enrolment in courses until graduation. It includes part-time and full-time students who enrol in a program of study in an institution and graduate from the same institution at which they began their studies (Durivage, 2004; Fleenor, 2002). How student retention is defined and measured is a problem for community colleges.
and universities (Wild & Ebbers, 2002) because the term student retention has been defined in a number of different ways (see Table 2.7).
Table 2.7. Several Definitions of Student Retention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Definition of Retention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Fowler &amp; Luna</td>
<td>Refers students' continued study until successful completion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>The operational definition of student retention was the act of enrolling in three consecutive semesters after initial first-time enrolment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Jones</td>
<td>The extent to which learners remain within a higher education institution and complete a program of study in a pre-determined time period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Pascarella &amp; Terenzini</td>
<td>The progressive re-enrolment in college, whether continuous from one term to the next or temporarily interrupted and then resumed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003 &amp; 2002</td>
<td>Summers, Wild &amp; Ebbers</td>
<td>Completion of a degree within a specified period of time, as well as continuing enrolment, and persistence toward the students' self-defined educational goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Smith, Street &amp; Olivarez</td>
<td>Re-enrolment to the next academic year as sophomores and second semester enrolment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Woodard, Mallory &amp; De Luca</td>
<td>Retention was an act where “some students persist and graduate, and others do not.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Moore, Bartkovich, Fetzner, &amp; Ison</td>
<td>Offered a two-fold definition of student retention, “first as a continued attendance in class; and second, as a successful performance in class.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Crawford</td>
<td>Maintenance of continued enrolment in classes throughout one semester” and “the ratio of units that student successfully-completed to the units attempted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Burr, Burr &amp; Novak</td>
<td>Efforts and strategies to anticipate and identify student needs prior to high school enrolment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Sydow &amp; Sandel</td>
<td>Enrolment in a subsequent semester and academic achievement as completion of two-thirds of courses attempted with a 2.0 grade point average or higher.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sandy (2012) suggests that colleges and universities must set out to define what they will use as their operational definition of student retention. The primary models for studying
student retention are grounded in the work of academic and social integration (Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993). Tinto (1993) also considers student involvement in academic and social activities of institutions because this typically increases the possibility that they continue their studies at the same university. Getzlaf et al. (1984), however, has found that social integration was not confirmed to be a coherent indicator of predicting retention, and Fox (1986) has demonstrated that more social integration can lead to higher attrition.

According to Tinto’s Model of Dropout (Tinto, 1975), dropout can be seen as a longitudinal interaction (during which the student can continually modify his or her goal) between the student and the academic and social system of the institution. Based on Tinto’s (1975) model, external factors, including family background, individual attributes and pre-college schooling, initially affect students’ commitment to their goals. Students’ attitudes towards their goal and institutional commitment can also be modified by internal experiences, including the academic system (intellectual development, grade performance) and social system (faculty interactions, peer-group). Finally, student experience can influence their decision to persist or dropout.

Tinto’s model considers faculty expertise as falling under social and academic systems of the model; socialisation and the feeling of belonging as falling under the social system of the model; and technological comfort as falling under the external factor of pre-college schooling and the academic system.

Based on retention studies, different predictors can influence student retention. Tinto (1993) has found that initial social and academic commitment to the college community may lead to higher retention. He also found commitment as the determining predictor that affects students’ decisions to remain at an institution (Beil, Reisen, Zea, & Caplan, 1999). Other
studies have demonstrated the importance of student participation in the academic and social setting of the institution. According to Pascarella et al. (as cited in Johnson, 1997), students who participate in an institution’s academic and social systems are more likely to have the commitment to complete their education.

According to Tinto’s retention model, the factors affecting retention are students’ pre-entry attributes, commitments and goals, and social and academic contribution. Several researchers have considered Tinto’s model and have found that, although there is a relationship between academic integration and retention, social integration as a retention predictor is inconsistent (Beil et al., 1999). Mutter (1992) found that social integration does not affect retention in a community college, but there is a link between academic integration and retention. Likewise, Bean and Metzer (1985) showed that social integration, academic and environmental variables, and student backgrounds are factors influencing retention (Hoyt, 1999). Many scholars (Bers & Smith, 1991; Claggett, 1996; Feldman, 1993; Voorhees, 1993; Windham, 1994) have employed Bean and Metzer’s model or Tinto’s model to evaluate the influence of different factors on student retention. Cabrera et al. (1992) has synthesised the two models as tools to examine the issue of retention in higher education.

Besides the general retention models discussed above, specific models have emerged to determine fields of interest that are unique to colleges and universities. These studies have identified other factors that may affect retention. Some other researchers, such as Lounsbury and DeNeui (1996) and Thompson (1993), have observed that students who live on campus have a stronger sense of community and a higher retention rate. Others (Terenzini & Pascarella, 1991; Tinto, 1987) have remarked that resources, policies, approaches, services and plans contributing to the development of the student, are important to achieve high levels
of retention. Specific models help leaders look within their organisation to determine unique issues related to their institution.

Although a number of studies have investigated retention in higher education, most of have considered just first year university students, rather than all undergraduate students. Leading theorists (Tinto and Cabrera) on student retention have carried out studies investigating general retention models in higher education by considering the aspects affecting students’ decisions to pursue their education. Based on Tinto’s (1993) retention model, factors such as students’ pre-entry attributes, goals and commitments, and social and academic integration all affect retention. Tinto found that inconsistency and isolation are predictors that affect students to drop out of their undergraduate studies (Cambiano, Denny, & DeVore, 2000). Kalsner (1991) identified four factors affecting students’ retention: uncertain expectations of the institution, adjustment concerns, financial issues and being academically unprepared. Kalsner argued that most students drop out of school voluntarily, and agreed with Tinto that students who had goals were more likely to remain enrolled in institutions (Cambiano et al., 2000).

According to Tinto (1982), his model of dropout explained some behaviours of dropout in higher education. However, he acknowledged the shortcomings of his model of dropout:

The model has a lack of sufficient emphasis on financial issues in student decisions in relation to higher education environments. It also does not sufficiently make distinction between those matters leading to institutional transfer and those leading to consistent dropout from higher education. Furthermore, it does not emphasise the significant differences in education careers marking the experience of students of
different, races, cultures, genders and social backgrounds. Finally, it is not so sensitive
to disengagement occurring within the two-year college sector. (p. 689)

Studies have considered other influential factors such as the institutional environment
and organisational features (Hoyt, 1999), and Peterson’s (1993) retention model examines the
relationship between a student’s career decision-making, self-efficacy and social and academic
integration at a state university. The influence of internationalised curriculum on student
retention, which is the main goal of this study, has not been addressed in previous studies.
Thus, in this research, I am seeking to explore the relationship between internationalised
curriculum and student retention.

Cross (1981) has observed three obstacles to successful completion of higher education
among mature-aged students:

1. Situational obstacles, emerging from the student’s lifestyle, such as the time
   required to be with family, and undertaking work responsibilities

2. Institutional obstacles, emerging from the approaches, policies and programs of the
   institution

3. Dispositional obstacles, individually and collectively, hold values, beliefs,
   perceptions and attitudes that might restrain contribution in organised learning
   programs.

Dispositional obstacles have also been confirmed by Findsen (2002) and O’Mahony & Sillitoe
(2001). The factors arising from the distance education literature include student motivation
(Bennett, 2003; Christie et al., 2004; Kember, 1995; Packham, Jones, Miller, & Thomas, 2004;
Truluck, 2007), identifying realistic objectives (Rowser, 1997; Seidman, 2005; Watson,
Johnson, & Austin, 2004), students’ self-assurance as learners (Cross, 1981; Devonport &
Lane, 2006; Rowley, 2003; Taylor, 2005), student satisfaction (DeShields, Kara, & Kaynak, 2005; Douglas, Douglas, & Barnes, 2006; Seidman, 2005).

The situational and institutional factors have also been confirmed by scholars in the distance education setting (Gibson & Graff, 1992; Pyper & Belanger, 2004), but institutional factors are not as influential as situational factors (Gibson & Graff, 1992). However, other studies have shown institutional factors to be influential (Ashby, 2004; Gaide, 2004; Johnson, 1997; Lesht & Shaik, 2005; Morgan & Tam, 1999). The institutional factors identified in the distance education literature are staff responsiveness (Lesht & Shaik, 2005; Vines, 1998), distance education program design (Hill, 2002; Lorenzetti, 2003; Moller, 1998; Wang, Sierra, & Folger, 2003), relevance of programs to students’ objectives (Ashby, 2004; Hall, 2001; Rödiger Voss & Gruber, 2006), student support systems (Simpson, 2004), and student orientation programs (Chandler, Levin, & Levin, 2002; Rowley, 2003).

2.13. Theoretical Framework

The review of the literature on the internationalisation of the curriculum, student satisfaction and student retention allows us to understand the philosophies, principles, and viewpoints of the researchers. This has demonstrated that many researchers have common views and beliefs that underpin their rationale to support the internationalisation of the curriculum. One common thread from this literature review is that internationalisation of the curriculum is one of the most important means for internationalisation of higher education.

An internationalised curriculum helps students to develop their intercultural competence. Universities with internationalised curricula can create attractive environments that can be interesting and useful for both local and international students. An internationalised
curriculum values alternative insights and perspectives and allows voices from different cultures and ethnicities to inform new responses to Australian education. Furthermore, the definitions of curriculum provide an operational basis for this study. Based on several definitions of curriculum that have been discussed earlier, a curriculum can be considered as everything a university offers that can help students to achieve their goals, and this can include content, services and facilities.

The theoretical framework provides the direction and foundation I need to determine my research methodology and for which data collection, analysis, interpretations and recommendations can be made. I adopt a mixed methods approach to examine the relationship between internationalised curriculum and international student retention through international student satisfaction. This means that a procedure was designed in my study for “collecting, analysing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study to understand a research problem” (Brewer & Hunter, 1989, p. 28). The theoretical framework for the present research is based on Bremer and Van der Wende’s (1995) internationalised curriculum model. This study involves the expectancy–disconfirmation theory, in considering the factors affecting customer satisfaction and service quality (Oliver, 1980) as well as the student integration theory (Tinto, 1975).

### 2.13.1. Internationalised curriculum model

Different models have been employed to assess internationalised curricula. These models show the potential factors that affect international students’ education. Bremer and Van der Wende’s (1995) model divides their conceptualisation of an internationalised curriculum into three parts:

1. International orientation in content
2. Aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally and socially) in an international and multicultural context

3. Designed for both domestic students and international students.

This definition combines the “international and multicultural, professional, and social dimensions of the role of education, and links the benefits of learning to both domestic students and those from abroad” (Odgers, 2006, p. 16). For the present study, this definition is regarded as a conceptual framework because internationalisation is more than a mere academic or professional concept. The present study explores the curriculum within a wider scope of cultural and social rationales for internationalisation. This study is also useful for teaching skills to students to make them socially prepared at an international level, and the present study suggests that internationalisation is designed for both local and international students.

2.13.2. **Expectancy–disconfirmation theory**

In previous studies, the expectation factor was a significant issue in a student’s (i.e., a customer’s) assessment of services and in the implementation of disconfirmation for measuring a student’s satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Oliver, 1980).

![Expectancy–disconfirmation theory](image)

Figure 2.3. Expectancy–disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1977, 1980).
The model includes four major elements, including expectations, performance, disconfirmation and satisfaction (see Figure 2.3), where expectation refers to an anticipated manner; performance refers to students’ assessment of goods or services; disconfirmation refers to a significant step in comparing expectations and performance perceptions; and satisfaction is the result of the interaction between expectation formation, performance perception and the comparison of both (disconfirmation). The relative strength of the disconfirmation or the formed expectations affects satisfaction.

According to Oliver (1980), the combination of expectations and perceived performance results in satisfaction. Positive or negative disconfirmation between expectations and performance contributes to this effect. If a product goes beyond expectations (positive disconfirmation) post-purchase satisfaction will be the outcome. If a product does not live up to expectations (negative disconfirmation) the consumer will be dissatisfied. Expectation and disconfirmation have different functions, and each has an additive effect on satisfaction. According to Oliver, “Positive discontinuations enhance a satisfaction judgment, while the disappointment of a negative disconfirmation decreases it” (Oliver et al., 1988, p. 496).

2.13.3. Tinto’s integration theory

Tinto developed the Student Integration Theory from a study in which he developed a model for describing the factors that lead a student to leave his or her studies before graduation (see Figure 2.4). Tinto found that a student’s commitment to the objective to complete his or her degree and the student’s commitment to university, along with the student’s level of academic and social integration form the student’s experience and are the criteria for the persistence or retention of a student. According to Tinto (1975), goal
commitment and institutional commitment are not the only factors for persistence or retention. Besides student–peer relationships, social interactions with staff are also important. Academic integration takes different forms (Tinto, 1975) and is related to the student’s academic involvement with staff and fellow students as represented by a grade point average, personal intellectual development and intellectual stimulation.

According to Tinto (2004), to improve undergraduate retention, all higher education institutions should facilitate readily available personal, academic and social services. Interactions on campus can affect students’ senses of connection to the university and allow students to explore the campus culture, meet expectations and graduate.
Internationalisation of university curricula seems to be a complicated procedure related to what, how and who is taught. If an internationalised curriculum is to be successful, it must offer a relevant educational experience for all students in a supportive setting. According to Biggs (1990), “Situational factors such as course structure, curriculum content, methods of teaching and assessment, and institutional rules and regulations not only provide a ‘climate’ for learning, but also have motivational consequences” (p. 6). Thus, both local and
international students can compete, keep up, perform, live and work successfully in tomorrow’s dynamic world.

Based on previous studies, economic rationales are of great importance for internationalisation. Economics has become the primary concern of higher education institutions for moving towards internationalisation. Dawkins (1990) believes that Australian higher education is basically a client-driven industry that needs an understanding of international stakeholders. Indeed, Australia’s higher education institutions have been accused of exploitation of international students for financial goals, along with a reduction of academic standards (Duan, 1997), and some Australian institutions have been criticised for considering students as mere customers (Marginson & Considine, 2000). In addition, some have been criticised because of their insensitivity towards the academic and cultural demands of international students (Jolley, 1997). According to Hirsch (1994), political and cultural differences are important to the students’ understanding of their education.

This chapter has presented a literature review relevant to the issue of internationalisation, which, for Knight (2004), is “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (p. 2). This chapter has also attempted to identify the aspects of the internationalisation of curricula that are important in determining student satisfaction. Furthermore, this literature review has found that modifying the internationalised curriculum can affect student retention (Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000; Gustafsson, Johnson, & Roos, 2005; Pariseau & McDaniel, 1997).
Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the research methodology for this study. It explains the research design, setting, population and procedures used to collect and analyse the data. The study adopted a quantitative as well as a qualitative approach to identify and describe the relationship between the internationalisation of the RMIT University curriculum, students’ satisfaction with the internationalised curriculum and international students’ retention. According to Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007), mixed methods research provides a “more complete picture by noting trends and generalisations as well as in-depth knowledge of participants’ perspectives” (p. 33), and it will produce richer, more valid and more reliable findings than research based on either a qualitative or a quantitative method alone (Greene & Caracelli, 1997).

By using quantitative research methods, I will be able to develop a model of the internationalisation of curriculum and student retention to identify variables that significantly increase the probability of international students’ retention at Australian universities. More specifically, the quantitative approach attempts to investigate the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between internationalised curriculum and international students’ retention in higher education?
2. What is the relationship between internationalised curriculum and international students’ satisfaction with the curriculum?
3. What is the relationship between international students’ satisfaction with the curriculum and international students’ retention in higher education?
4. Is there an indirect relationship between internationalised curriculum and international students’ retention in higher education that acts through students’ satisfaction with the curriculum?

Depending on the nature of the research questions, quantitative research can describe different experiences or behaviours and look for relationships between them. However, the complexity of students’ satisfaction with the internationalised curriculum that influences their retention in higher education cannot be examined exclusively by using survey research. To address this issue, I will also use a qualitative approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of the thoughts, feelings and experiences of international students regarding the internationalised curriculum provided by RMIT University.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 2), qualitative research is multi-method in focus and involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter.

This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2)

Methodologically, this research is grounded in the sequential explanatory mixed methods research design. The research is conducted in two phases. Phase one includes the collection and analysis of quantitative data on the research model, target population, and sample, instrumentation, operational definition and measures, data collection procedure, data analysis methods, and validity and reliability of instrument. Phase two includes the collection and analysis of qualitative data on sample selection, interviews, data collection, data analysis and ethical issues.
3.2. Research Design

Research methodologies can be classified in various ways, but the most common classifications are qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. Originally, quantitative research methodologies were adopted from natural and physical sciences, while qualitative research methodologies were developed to study social and cultural phenomena. Quantitative research methods use the deductive, confirmatory or top down scientific method (Creswell, 2009). Quantitative methods are used primarily for description, explanation and prediction. The strength of quantitative research is that it often produces reliable and quantifiable data that can potentially be generalised to a large population. Quantitative analysis often allows researchers to test specific hypotheses and summarise vast amounts of information.

Researchers also avoid personal bias by keeping a distance from participating subjects by studying subjects unknown to them (Babbie, 2010; Manheim & Brians, 2008; Singh, 2007). Quantitative methods are not without their weaknesses. Some of the weaknesses of quantitative methods are that it sometimes removes human behaviour from its real world setting and ignores the effects of variables that have not been measured and included in the model. Quantitative research also lacks a depth and richness of data that is present with qualitative research. However, Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007) argue, quantitative research is, “weak in understanding the context or setting in which people talk. Further, quantitative researchers are in the background, and their own personal biases and interpretations are seldom discussed” (p. 9). For example, suppose that through statistical analysis it is shown that internationalised curriculum has a statistically significant impact on international student retention. How do students make sense of their experiences, satisfaction or retention? To
address this question, it might be beneficial to conduct student interviews to gauge their perception of the internationalised curriculum.

The purpose of qualitative research is to understand and interpret social interactions by studying the whole, wide-angle lens and depth of a phenomenon. Qualitative research is a bottom-up method where the researcher generates a new hypothesis from the data collected. The most common research objectives are to explore, discover and construct human behaviour in a dynamic, situational, social and personal way that is observed in a natural environment. The type of data collected includes words, images or objects that are formed by open-ended responses, interviews, participant observations, field notes and reflections. The types of data analysis includes identifying patterns, features and themes to create a narrative report with contextual description and direct quotations from research participants (Fox, 2008; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Lichtman, 2006; Shank, 2008).

One of the greatest strengths of qualitative methods is that they have the potential to understand phenomena in greater depth than quantitative methods. As Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007) point out, “qualitative research is seen as deficient because of the personal interpretations made by the researcher, the ensuing bias created by this, and the difficulty in generalising findings to a large group because of the limited number of participants studied” (p. 9).

By combining qualitative and quantitative methods, the weaknesses in one method can be offset by the strengths in the other method (John W. Creswell, 2003; John W Creswell & Clark, 2007). As Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007) explain:

A problem exists when the quantitative results are inadequate to provide explanations of outcomes, and the problem can best be understood by using qualitative data to
enrich and explain the quantitative results in the words of the participants. Situations in which this problem occurs are those in which the quantitative results need further interpretation as to what they mean or when more detailed views of select participants can help to explain the quantitative results. (p. 35)

Therefore, mixed methods can be defined as collecting, analysing and mixing or integrating both quantitative and qualitative data at some stage during the research process of a single study for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the research problem (Hanson, Creswell, Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation and expansion are five primary theoretical purposes for using mixed methods research (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989) that allow researchers to be more confident in their results. Triangulation allows researchers to get convergent results from the different methods. Complementarity gives researchers the opportunity to clarify the results from one method with the results from the other method. Development occurs when the results from one method help develop or inform the other method in sampling, implementation and measurement. Initiation seeks the discovery of paradox and contradiction of results from one method with results from the other method. Expansion refers to the wide range of inquiry that researchers use, such as different methods for different inquiry components. These five primary theoretical purposes for using mixed methods research can provide insight into what this study aims to achieve by integrating quantitative and qualitative research.

This study was designed to gather high-quality data to identify aspects of the curriculum that are important to international students at an Australian university, as well as providing administrators and academics with an understanding of the retention indicators of international students at Australian universities. Although empirical databases are available
and could be mined using recently developed techniques, quantitative data alone cannot provide answers to the question of how international students make sense of their experiences, satisfaction and retention. The purpose of qualitative research is to understand and interpret social interactions through the study of the whole, wide-angle lens and depth of human behaviour in a dynamic, situational, social and personal view that is observed in a natural environment. Therefore, qualitative information is also needed to understand the depth of students’ perceptions of an internationalised curriculum as well as their experiences, satisfaction and retention. This research study involves collecting and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data, a mixed methods approach was designed to achieve complementarity and triangulation, as well as for development and expansion purposes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Data Collection</th>
<th>Quantitative Data Analysis</th>
<th>Qualitative Data Collection</th>
<th>Qualitative Data Analysis</th>
<th>Interpretation of Entire Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Figure 3.1 Sequential explanatory design (Creswell, 2003).

Among the types of mixed methods designs classified by Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007), this study employed a sequential explanatory design to address the research questions. The strategy is illustrated in Figure 3.1. Quantitative data collection and analyses were implemented first, followed by qualitative data collection and analyses in two distinct phases. The quantitative component consists of data from the Higher Education Onshore – Student Experience Survey run by the Survey Services Centre of RMIT University in 2012. The qualitative component includes interview data with 13 purposefully selected international students to explore the results of the quantitative component in more depth through a
qualitative case study analysis {Creswell, 2007 #286}. This research is explanatory in nature because it places greater emphasis on the quantitative data in addressing the research questions. The researcher collects and analyses quantitative data to identify significant predictors of international students’ retention at RMIT University. These results inform our understanding of the issues raised by each hypothesis and research question individually. The results from the survey can be used to create interview questions. Then participants will be asked to answer these questions to draw out their views of the faculty in fostering internationalisation, assessment of student satisfaction and retention along with the impact of the internationalised curriculum on student retention.

When deciding on the research methods to be employed in this study, the goal of the researcher was not to find the single best method, but to use the most effective and useful tools, techniques and ways to describe, examine, analyse, and better understand the topic. The researcher believes that there is no single best method when conducting research in social or behavioural science. Complex issues in social sciences, particularly in the field of education, can be investigated effectively and successfully by using a multidisciplinary approach. Quantitative and qualitative methods can be used together to produce detailed analyses of complex social as well as educational issues.

3.3. Quantitative Research

The sample consisted of 2,421 undergraduate international students who were studying in RMIT University in 2012. The data was available from the Survey Service Centre at RMIT University and was collected in the Student Experience Survey – Higher Education Onshore 2012 questionnaire. Data was analysed using both bivariate (correlation analysis) and
multivariate (Structural Equation Modelling [SEM]) techniques with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS).

3.4. Research Model

There is a large body of research and theory exploring the individual, social and organisational factors that have an impact on student retention. However, over the last decade, there has been a substantial focus on the factors pertinent to retention that are internal to universities and are within immediate institutional control and action (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). For example, in terms of the academic reasons for students leaving before completing their program, many studies have shown a positive association between student withdrawal and poor academic preparation or performance (Ashby, 2004; Krause, Hartley, James, & McInnis, 2005; Rickinson & Rutherford, 1996). Having insufficient information about the course or institution before students enrol has been more recently identified as another major reason for withdrawal (Yorke & Longden, 2007). Some studies have discussed generic factors associated with student withdrawal, such as incompatibility between the students and their course and a lack of commitment to the course (Rickinson & Rutherford, 1996; Williford & Schaller, 2005).

For international students, internationalisation of the curriculum is a vital part of the process that can influence students’ satisfaction and retention. According to Leask (2001), the internationalised curriculum is a complex process about whom, how and what we teach. Based on this understanding, I believe that the internationalised curriculum should be divided into three sections: approaches, methods and content.
In addition to considering the internationalisation of the curriculum, many researchers have found that student’s satisfaction is an important contributor to students’ retention (Spicuzza, 1992; Wince & Borden, 1995). Through the review of the literature in Chapter 2, this study has recognised that the literature does not address the relationship between international students’ satisfaction with the internationalised curriculum and their retention. In developing a model for the internationalisation of curriculum and retention, this study assesses variables that may increase the probability of international students’ retention at Australian universities. The research model in Figure 3.2 illustrates the following hypotheses that are tested in this study.

**H1.** There is a significant relationship between internationalised curriculum and international students’ retention in higher education.

- **H1.1.** There is a significant relationship between the academic approach and international students’ retention in higher education.
- **H1.2.** There is a significant relationship between course content and international students’ retention in higher education.
- **H1.3.** There is a significant relationship between teaching method 1 and international students’ retention in higher education.
- **H1.4.** There is a significant relationship between teaching method 2 and international students’ retention in higher education.

**H2.** There is a significant relationship between internationalised curriculum and international students’ satisfaction.

- **H2.1.** There is a significant relationship between academic approach and international students’ satisfaction.
• **H2.2.** There is a significant relationship between course content and international students’ satisfaction.

• **H2.3.** There is a significant relationship between teaching method 1 and international students’ satisfaction.

• **H2.4.** There is a significant relationship between teaching method 2 and international students’ satisfaction.

**H3.** There is a significant relationship between international students’ satisfaction and their retention in higher education.

**H4.** There is an indirect significant relationship between internationalised curriculum and international students’ retention in higher education that acts through students’ satisfaction.

• **H4.1.** There is an indirect significant relationship between the academic approach and international students’ retention in higher education that acts through students’ satisfaction.

• **H4.2.** There is an indirect significant relationship between course content and international students’ retention in higher education that acts through students’ satisfaction.

• **H4.3.** There is an indirect significant relationship between teaching method 1 and international students’ retention in higher education that acts through students’ satisfaction.

• **H4.4.** There is an indirect significant relationship between teaching method 2 and international students’ retention that acts through students’ satisfaction.
This hypothesis does not emerge specifically from the literature review, but allows for identification of other influencing factors during the research.

Figure 3.2. The research model of international students’ retention and internationalisation of the curriculum in the Australian higher education setting (RMIT University).

Four hypotheses were formulated for this study, including four independent variables, one mediator variable and one dependent variable. Table 3.1 shows the independent, mediator and dependent variables with respect to the hypotheses.
Table 3.1. Independent, Mediator and Dependent Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Mediator Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Approach</td>
<td>Student Satisfaction</td>
<td>Student Retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Method 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Method 2</td>
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</table>

3.5. Target Population and Sample

The target population was the 35,018 students who were studying in RMIT University in the year 2012. Among the 13,381 respondents who completed the Student Experience Survey, 2,421 were undergraduate international students. Including international students as part of the sample of the study had the potential to provide useful insights into the experience of internationalisation. I recruited undergraduate students because they would have more opportunity to continue study and their retention could be measured clearly.

Recommendations in the literature on the size of the sample for using SEM analysis are mixed. However, agreement could be arrived at from a series of recommendations by software developers (Byrne, 2013; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1997; Kline, 1998) as well as statisticians who are running simulation studies on SEM to establish a minimum requirement for the sample size. A thorough review of published research and recommended samples sizes seems to agree on a sufficient sample size of 120 and above to test multiple hypotheses in a model of interacting variables. SEM analysis with a sample of fewer than 100 subjects may be flawed and may encounter technical problem unless a simple model is evaluated (Kline, 2011).
A larger sample (more than 200) is needed for complicated models. Kline (2011) suggests a 10:1 ratio of the number of subjects to the number of free parameters. Other estimates are available that suggest that a sample size between 100 to 150 participants is sufficient to conduct SEM by Ding, Velicer, and Harlow (Ding, Velicer, & Harlow, 1995).

The literature on survey methods suggests that sampling error is expected for almost any method of subject assignment, but there are two factors that reduce the possible error during the assignment process including “an increase in the sample size and increased homogeneity of the elements being sampled” (Babbie, 1998, p. 2019). Therefore, it seems likely that the sample size of 2,421 would be appropriate for this.

3.6. Instrumentation

This study used the Student Experience Survey – Higher Education Onshore 2012 questionnaire that was prepared by the Survey Services Centre at RMIT University. The survey was designed to capture feedback about the total student experience at RMIT University in 2012. The questionnaire consisted of demographic characteristics of students along with another two major sections: one on student experience and one on campus life. The student experience was divided into the following five subscales: good teaching, generic skills, clear goals and standards, appropriate workload, and appropriate assessment. Two other subsections included overall satisfaction and other information. The section of the questionnaire on campus life was designed to collect information on the following 10 subsections: learning support, including library, computing facilities and learning support services; online services; communication; campus life and environment; building and facilities; administration; services and programs for students; RMIT Link; student union; and
outcomes. Respondents were asked to rate their perceptions on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3.7. Operational Definition and Measures

To match the questionnaire data with the objectives of the study, the data was modified through the following steps: items were identified and categorised from the literature on student satisfaction, retention and internationalisation with respect to approaches, methods and content; items from the questionnaire were categorised as satisfaction, retention, approaches, methods and content; and after checking all items, the questionnaire was modified as follows:

Socioeconomic characteristics. Socio demographic characteristics of students were classified by their citizenship, type of program and schools.

Internationalised curriculum. The definition of internationalisation and internationalised curriculum used for this study was based on Knight’s (2004) definition, “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (p. 11) and Bremer and van der Wende’s (1995) definition of internationalised curriculum as “curricula with an international orientation in content, aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally/socially) in an international and multicultural context, and designed for domestic students as well as international students” (p. 1). In this study, the curriculum at RMIT University is assumed to be an internationalised curriculum, consistent with these definitions. An internationalised curriculum can be measured by three concepts: approaches (organisation of the learning experiences), methods (how it is taught) and content (what is taught). All components will be
measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

**Academic approach.** In the academic approach, internationalisation has been described as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions (teaching, research and service) or delivery of post-secondary education” (Jane Knight, 2003, p. 33). Academic Approach was measured by 12 items using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) as follows:

1. The teaching staff of this program motivate students to do their best work
2. The staff put a lot of time into commenting on students’ work
3. The staff seem more interested in testing what students have memorised than what they have understood
4. Students were generally given enough time to understand things they have to learn
5. The staff really tried to understand difficulties that students might have with the work
6. The teaching staff normally give students helpful feedback on how they are going
7. Lecturers are extremely good at explaining things
8. Too many staff ask students questions just about facts
9. The teaching staff work hard to make their courses interesting
10. There is a lot of pressure on students in the program
11. The staff make it clear from the start what they expect from students
12. Teaching staff can be hard to contact.

**Teaching method.** Effective teaching should present a variety of teaching methods so that different students will have equal opportunities to learn in a way that is effective for them.
Teachers can apply some actions with a direct impact on learning and teaching inside and outside the classroom. Today’s technology such as an online environment makes it relatively easy for teachers to use technology in learning activities and teaching styles in both inside and outside the classroom. Teaching Method was measured by 18 items using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) as follows:

1. Timetabling and room bookings are well organised
2. Students find it easy to check enrolment status and invoices online
3. Students find it easy to check results online
4. Students would know what to do if they had a problem with their student administration
5. RMIT effectively resolves any student administration issues that they might have
6. Students could easily access information about their program options
7. Students find the online environment useful to communicate with their teachers outside of class
8. Students find the online environment useful to work with other students on group assignments outside of class
9. Students find it easy to know the standard of work expected
10. The assessment methods employed in the program require an in-depth understanding of the program content
11. Students find the online environment helpful to balance their studies with their work and home commitments
12. Classrooms are well maintained
13. Lecture theatres are well maintained
14. Laboratories are well maintained
15. General access computer labs are well maintained
16. Lounge spaces are well maintained
17. Toilets are well maintained
18. Lifts are well maintained.

**Course content.** Bremer and van der Wende (1995) defined internationalised curriculum as “curricula with an international orientation in content, aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally/socially) in an international and multicultural context, and designed for domestic students as well as international students” (p. 10). Therefore, Course Content was measured by 12 items using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) as follows:

1. The program develops students’ problem-solving skills;
2. The workload is too heavy;
3. The program sharpens students’ analytic skills;
4. Students usually have a clear idea of where they are going and what is expected of them in this program;
5. To do well in this program, all students really need a good memory;
6. The program helps students develop their ability to work as a team member;
7. Students feel confident with unfamiliar problems;
8. The program improves students’ skills in written communication;
9. It was often hard to discover what is expected of students in this program;
10. The program helps students develop the ability to plan their own work;
11. The sheer volume of work to be got through in this program means that it can't all be comprehended.

12. It's easy for students to get the information they need about their program.

**Student satisfaction.** In past research, overall satisfaction has been measured using a single-item, but it is difficult to assess the reliability and validity of a single item measure of satisfaction (Schnake et al., 2004). Therefore, for this study, Student Satisfaction was measured with 8 items using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The first is an overall satisfaction measure and the others are related to the students' satisfaction pertaining to library, computing facilities and services, online services, services and program for students, RMIT links, and the student union. Excluding questions about overall satisfaction with the quality of the program, the other items were asked in the following questions:

1. Overall satisfaction with the quality of the program
2. Student satisfaction with the library
   a. The library’s e-resources collection
   b. The library’s book collections
   c. The quality of service provided by library staff
   d. The library’s facilities
   e. Library opening hours
3. Student satisfaction with computing facilities
   a. Access to computer facilities at RMIT
   b. Access to the specialist software that I require
   c. The availability of computer printing facilities
4. Student satisfaction with learning support services
   a. Study support
   b. Language support

5. Student satisfaction with online services
   a. I am satisfied with my online course materials
   b. I am satisfied with my online course activities
   c. I find the online environment useful to communicate with my teachers outside of class
   d. I find the online environment useful to work with other students on group assignments outside of class
   e. I find the online environment helps me balance my studies with my work and home commitments
   f. I am satisfied with the Internet access provided by RMIT

6. Student satisfaction with services and programs (I am satisfied with the service of the program of…)
   a. The Hub
   b. Orientation
   c. Student telephone helpline
   d. Health promotion
   e. Scholarship and financial advice
   f. Career planning and advice
   g. Housing advice and assistance
h. International student advisory services

i. Legal advice

j. Counselling services

k. Disability support

l. Student leadership programs

m. Religious or spiritual services

7. Student satisfaction with RMIT links (i.e., “I am satisfied with the service of the program of…”)

   a. Sport programs, sport clubs and recreation activities

   b. Visual arts, performing arts and gallery activities

8. Student satisfaction with student union (i.e., “I am satisfied with the service of the program of…”)

   a. Representation of student interests to the university

   b. Campaigns, information and resources to improve conditions for students

   c. Advice and support if I had a problem with the university

   d. Social activities, bands and competitions

   e. Clubs and collectives

   f. Student media, such as Catalyst and RMITV

**Student retention.** Student retention is the continuous enrolment of a student in successive semesters of a course until successful completion of a degree (Durivage, 2001). To improve the potential reliability and validity of the measurement items, student retention was measured using two other dimensions. The first relates to student’s commitment to the goal and the institution; the second relates to student’s level of integration within social and
academic elements (Tinto, 1975). Consistent with the definition of retention and these two dimensions, Student Retention was measured by 12 items using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) as follows:

1. RMIT generally responds well to student feedback
2. If I have the opportunity to undertake further studies in the future, I would like to study again at RMIT
3. As an RMIT graduate I will be highly employable
4. At RMIT there are enough activities to develop students skills outside of their program
5. Students can balance their studies with their work and home commitments
6. Students have enough opportunities to discuss their academic work with teaching staff
7. Students have enough opportunities to work with other students in their program
8. I have enough contact with students in other programs
9. The RMIT campus is a good place to spend time outside classes
10. RMIT is friendly to people from all backgrounds
11. Students feel personally safe on campus
12. Students are treated fairly at RMIT.

3.8. Data Collection Procedure

The Survey Services Centre of RMIT University was contacted in September 2012 and permission was sought to use the data. The Survey Services Centre is part of the Policy and Planning Group that provides comprehensive, accurate and timely analysis of student and
other surveys at RMIT. Since 1999, RMIT has collected student experience data at the program and university-wide level. The Higher Education Onshore – Student Experience Survey asks students about their learning, teaching and campus environment experiences each year.

Information from students about their university experience and their program experience are useful to address the research questions of this study regarding the relationship between an internationalised curriculum, international students’ satisfaction and their retention in higher education. After obtaining appropriate permission from RMIT University and signing the consent form regarding ethical issues, data from the 2012 Higher Education Onshore – Student Experience Survey run by the Survey Services Centre at RMIT University was received.

3.9. Data Analysis

The quantitative techniques chosen for this study aim to analyse data related to international students’ retention at RMIT University. Hypotheses were statistically tested using the SPSS and AMOS software packages. Before statistical modelling analyses, preliminary analyses were performed to test the maximum likelihood estimation, data normality, multicollinearity and the model’s goodness-of-fit.

SEM was used to analyse the hypothesised relationships between Student Retention as the dependent variable \( Y \), Student Satisfaction \( M \) as a mediator variable, and Teaching Method 1 \( X_1 \), Teaching Method 2 \( X_2 \), Academic Approach \( X_3 \) and Course Content \( X_4 \) as independent variables. The fourth research question of the study was to determine whether Student Satisfaction mediates the relationship between Internationalised Curriculum and
Student Retention; therefore, bootstrapping was used to test the indirect effect. To examine the construct validity and reliability of measures, confirmatory factor analysis was used to evaluate whether the scale of measures accurately represents the concept of interest. Validity covers convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is evaluated by significant factor loadings, construct reliability and average variance extracted.

3.10. Maximum Likelihood Estimation

Maximum likelihood estimation is a statistical technique used for estimating the parameters in a statistical model. Maximum likelihood estimation has proven to be a very useful way to handle missing data by looking for probability distribution that estimates the observed data. In addition, maximum likelihood estimation is approximately unbiased in large samples because the estimators are consistent (Allison, 2003). According to Byrne (2010), it is usually assumed that the observed variables are continuous and that they follow a normal distribution. Maximum likelihood estimation was chosen for this study because the continuous variables were normally distributed.

3.11. Identifying Outliers

An outlier is an observation that is distant from other observations and can be univariate, bivariate, or multivariate. The Mahalanobis distance is “the distance of a case from the centroid of the remaining cases where the centroid is the point created at the intersection of the means of all the variables” (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2000, p. 68) and is used to identify multivariate outliers. Multivariate outliers can be identified by checking whether p1 and p2
< .05 or whether the Mahalanobis distance statistic, d-squared, exceeds 2.5 in small samples (n < 100) or exceeds 3 or 4 in large samples (R. E. Anderson, Babin, Black, & Hair, 2010; Byrne, 2010). Among all responses, no multivariate outliers were found (see Appendix A).

### 3.12. Normality of Data

To test for the normality of data, the skewness and kurtosis values of the measured variables were examined (Byrne, 2010). According to the assessment of normality results, all values of skewness and kurtosis in this study were less than ±2 and all measured variables were considered to be normally distributed. (Schumacker & Lomax, 2012; See Appendix B).

### 3.13. Multicollinearity

In statistics, multicollinearity arises when the independent variables in a multiple regression model are too highly correlated. Multicollinearity can seriously distort the validity of a model by inflating the variances of the parameter estimates. As a rule of thumb, Guilford (1967) states that there is the potential for multicollinearity if the correlation between variables is 0.9 or more (Hair, 2006).

### 3.14. Goodness-of-Fit

To assess direct and indirect relationships among variables, a two-step procedure using SEM and confirmatory factor analyses was followed (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). SEM was
used to test the fit of the model (Table 3.3) and evidence of discriminatory validity was obtained through chi-square tests (Bentler & Bonett, 1980).

Table 3.2. Fit Indices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goodness-of-Fit Measure</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Acceptable Fit Levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolute Fit Measures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square statistic</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ (df, $\rho$)</td>
<td>$\rho &gt; 0.05$ (at $\alpha=0.05$ level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodness-of-Fit Index</td>
<td>GFI</td>
<td>Values closer to 0.95 and above indicate satisfactory fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root Mean Square Error of Approximation</td>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>RMSEA&lt;0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental Fit Measurement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tucker-Lewis Index</td>
<td>TLI</td>
<td>Values closer to 0.95 and above indicate satisfactory fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normed Fit Index</td>
<td>NFI</td>
<td>Values closer to 0.95 and above indicate satisfactory fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Fit Index</td>
<td>CFI</td>
<td>Values closer to 0.95 and above indicate satisfactory fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parsimonious Fit Measures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normed Chi-square</td>
<td>$\chi^2$/df</td>
<td>$1.0 &lt; \chi^2$/df &lt; 3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akaike Information Criterion</td>
<td>AIC</td>
<td>Model with lowest AIC is preferred</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hair (2006); Byrne (2010); Ho (2006); Hooper et al (2008)

Based on Hair and Hair’s (2006) explanation, various indices are able to assess the fit of a model. These include chi-square ($\chi^2$), goodness-of-fit index, adjusted goodness-of-fit
index, incremental fit index, comparative fit index, and root mean square error of approximation.

3.15. Evaluation of the Measurement Model

Before evaluating the fit of the structure model, it was necessary to define a measurement model to verify that the 51 measurement variables created to reflect the six unobserved constructs do so in a reliable manner. The overall fit of the measurement model was determined by a confirmatory factor analysis. Figure 3.3 shows the estimated measurement model as a structural diagram so that the relationships between observed variables and constructs can be examined in terms of the standardised factor loadings and error variance for measurement items. Table 3.3 shows the measurement statistics for the measurement model.

Table 3.3. Fit indices for the Measurement Model of International Students’ Retention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit index</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square²</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFI</td>
<td>0.891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGFI</td>
<td>0.879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFI</td>
<td>0.902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFI</td>
<td>0.902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>0.033</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a well-fitting model, the chi-square value is equal or larger than 0.05, values of goodness-of-fit index, incremental fit index and comparative fit index are equal or bigger than
to 0.95, and suitable values of root mean square error of approximation are equal to or smaller than to 0.08.

The fit indices of the measurement model were \( \chi^2 = 26004.958 \), degrees of freedom = 2392, \( p = .000 \); goodness-of-fit index = 0.891; adjusted goodness-of-fit index = 0.879; comparative fit index = 0.902; incremental fit index = 0.902; root mean square error of approximation = 0.033. Because the value of the chi-square statistic is sensitive to sample size, if other fit indices provided a perfect model fit, the result of this index can be neglected (Hair, 2006).

3.16. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Constructs Variables

3.16.1. Confirmatory factor analysis for teaching method

Before testing the measurement model, separate confirmatory factor analyses were conducted for Teaching Method as a latent variable. This hypothesised model, based on fit indices and factor loadings (> .5), was tested to examine if it fit the data well and to verify that the measurement variables used to reflect the unobserved constructs do so in a reliable manner (Figure 3.3).
Figure 3.3. Confirmatory factor analysis for Teaching Method as a latent variable.
The fit indices do not reveal that the requirements to maintain factors in the model are met. The factor loadings for items 1 to 6 of the Teaching Method variable were less than .5, which disqualifies the item from inclusion in the model (Figure 3.3). Therefore, the model needed to be modified (see Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4 Modified Model for Teaching Method as a latent variable.
Figure 3.5. Measurement model.
Although the factor loadings were more than .5, the requirement of having satisfied three fit indices is not met (Figure 3.5). Therefore, the measurement model needs to be modified.

### 3.17. Modification Indices

Examination of the modification indices suggests that the fit of the model can be improved substantially by allowing the error terms of (for example) e26 and e28 to be correlated. As shown in Table 3.4, allowing these two error terms to be correlated will reduce the chi-square value of the modified model by at least 316.244.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modification index</th>
<th>Par change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e501 --e54</td>
<td>215.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e401 --e501</td>
<td>312.480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e13 --e14</td>
<td>302.806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e8 --e48</td>
<td>218.560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e7 --e66</td>
<td>372.609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e2 --e4</td>
<td>220.335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e2 --e3</td>
<td>212.597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e1 --e62</td>
<td>172.324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e26 --e28</td>
<td>316.244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e23 --e401</td>
<td>150.451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e45 --e44</td>
<td>191.320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e45 --e25</td>
<td>282.103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Ho (2006) states, “Without a strong theoretical justification, employing the values of the modification indices to improve model fit increases the probability that the researcher is capitalizing on the uniqueness of the particular data set, and the results will most likely be a theoretical” (p. 310). Because items were not supported to be correlated, the model was modified by dropping one of the lower loading factors (Figure 3.6).
Figure 3.6. Modified measurement model.
Having performed the permitted modification, the final model shows that all of the
factor loadings are more than .5 and the fit indices are acceptable (Table 3.5).

Table 3.5. Fit indices for Modified Measurement Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>NPAR</th>
<th>CMIN</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>CMIN/DF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Default model</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>9986.836</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>6.658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated model</td>
<td>1722</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence model</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>185099.767</td>
<td>1640</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>112.866</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>RMR</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>PGFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Default model</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.944</td>
<td>.936</td>
<td>.822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated model</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence model</td>
<td>.327</td>
<td>.181</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Baseline Comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>NFI Delta1</th>
<th>RFI rho1</th>
<th>IFI Delta2</th>
<th>TLI rho2</th>
<th>CFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Default model</td>
<td>.946</td>
<td>.941</td>
<td>.954</td>
<td>.949</td>
<td>.954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated model</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence model</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parsimony-Adjusted Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>PRATIO</th>
<th>PNFI</th>
<th>PCFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Default model</td>
<td>.915</td>
<td>.865</td>
<td>.872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated model</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence model</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>LO 90</td>
<td>HI 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Default model</td>
<td>8486.836</td>
<td>8173.985</td>
<td>8806.304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated model</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence model</td>
<td>183459.767</td>
<td>182050.717</td>
<td>184875.112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>FMIN</th>
<th>F0</th>
<th>LO 90</th>
<th>HI 90</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Default model</td>
<td>1.120</td>
<td>.952</td>
<td>.916</td>
<td>.987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated model</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence model</td>
<td>20.753</td>
<td>20.570</td>
<td>20.412</td>
<td>20.728</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>LO 90</th>
<th>HI 90</th>
<th>PCLOSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Default model</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence model</td>
<td>.112</td>
<td>.112</td>
<td>.112</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>AIC</th>
<th>BCC</th>
<th>BIC</th>
<th>CAIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Default model</td>
<td>10430.836</td>
<td>10437.027</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated model</td>
<td>3444.000</td>
<td>3492.016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence model</td>
<td>185263.767</td>
<td>185266.054</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>ECVI</th>
<th>LO 90</th>
<th>HI 90</th>
<th>MECVI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Default model</td>
<td>1.170</td>
<td>1.134</td>
<td>1.205</td>
<td>1.170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated model</td>
<td>.386</td>
<td>.386</td>
<td>.386</td>
<td>.392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence model</td>
<td>20.772</td>
<td>20.614</td>
<td>20.930</td>
<td>20.772</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.18. Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was used to test the relationships between all variables of the study, including the dependent and independent variables. A positive correlation coefficient (r) indicates a positive association between variables. According to Guilford (1967), the strength of the relationship is slight when $r < .2$, low when $r = .20$ to $.40$, moderate when $r = .40$ to $.70$, high when $r = .70$ to $.90$ and very high when $r > .90$.

3.19. SEM

The Structural Equation Model (SEM) was used to analyse the hypothesised relationships between the independent, mediator and dependent variables. SEM is a multivariate technique combining aspects of multiple regression and factor analysis that gives an opportunity “to better represent theoretical concepts by using multiple measures of a concept to reduce the measurement error of that concept as well as it improves the statistical estimation of the relationships between concepts by accounting for the measurement error in the concepts” (Hair, 2006, p. 608).
SEM was performed with Student Retention as the dependent variable ($Y$), Student Satisfaction ($M$) as a mediator variable and Teaching Method 1 ($X_1$), Teaching Method 2 ($X_2$), Academic Approach ($X_3$) and Course Content ($X_4$) as independent variables.

3.20. Bootstrapping Method

The fourth research question of the study was to determine whether student satisfaction mediates the relationship between the internationalised curriculum and student retention. Baron and Kenny (1986) defined a mediator as a variable that “accounts for the relation between the predictor and the criterion” (p. 1176). If there is a relationship between $X$ and $Y$, when controlling for $M$, the relationship between $X$ and $Y$ is reduced (sometimes to zero) significantly. Figure 3.7 shows the most common model of mediation.

![Mediation model](image)

Figure 3.7. Mediation model.

Bootstrapping is an increasingly popular method for testing the indirect effect of a variable (Bollen & Stine, 1990; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). In this method, the sample “is conceptualised as a pseudo-population that represents the broader population from which the
sample was derived, and the sampling distribution of any statistic can be generated by calculating the statistic of interest in multiple resamples of the data set” (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007, p. 190).

3.21. Validity and Reliability of Instrument

Confirmatory factor analysis is a statistical technique used to examine the construct validity of measures and constructs. Validity is the extent to which a scale or set of measures accurately represents the concept of interest (Hair, 2006). Construct validity covers convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is evaluated by significant factor loadings, construct reliability and average variance extracted.

According to Byrne (2010), discriminant validity is an assessment of “the extent to which independent assessment methods diverge in their measurement of different traits” (p. 275). In measurement models, two methods can be used to consider discriminant validity: correlation and average variance extracted. In the correlational method, constructs that are highly correlated with other constructs should be rejected. In average variance extracted, constructs should be greater than the shared square standardised correlation between the construct and all other constructs in the model (Hair, 2006).

For examining discriminant validity, this research used $r = .90$ as a rule of thumb (Guilford, 1956) for the cut-off score for the assessment of correlated constructs (Byrne, 2010). Construct reliability is assessed by the square of the factor loadings and the error variance of measured items by using following formula: construct reliability $= \frac{(\sum \lambda)^2}{(\sum \lambda)^2 + \Sigma e}$ where $(\lambda)$ is the factor loading and $(e)$ is the error variance of measured items. The average variance
The average variance extracted is calculated with the following formula: \( \text{average variance extracted} = \frac{\sum \lambda^2}{n} \) where \( \lambda \) is the factor loading and \( n \) is the number of measured items.

The convergent validity of a measure is acceptable when the value of the factor loadings and the average variance extracted are more than 0.5 (Hair, 2006). The construct reliability is acceptable when the value of construct reliability is more than 0.7 (Hair, 2006). The discriminant validity of the measures is adequate when the maximum value of the square of the correlation between constructs is less than the minimum value of the average variance extracted.

According to the measurement model, all results provided evidence of convergent validity in the model, which meant that all items loaded significantly on the hypothesised constructs (see Figure 3.5). The measurement statistics for all six unobserved constructs are explained in detail in the following sections.

**3.21.1. Convergent validity of Teaching Method**

As Table 3.6 shows that the factors loading for all items of Teaching Method were greater than .50; therefore all of them were accepted. In addition, for the factor Teaching Method 1, the strongest indicator was item six followed by items five and seven. For the factor Teaching Method 2, the strongest indicator was item eleven followed by items thirteen and ten. The value of average variance extracted and Construct Reliability was 5.10 and .881, respectively, for Teaching Method 1, and .667 and .933, respectively, for Teaching Method 2 (See Table 3.6).
Table 3.6. Convergent Validity of the Measurement Model – Teaching Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Factor loading &gt; .5</th>
<th>Average Variance Extracted &gt; .5</th>
<th>Construct Reliability &gt; .7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Method</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timetabling and room bookings are well organised</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find it easy to check my enrolment status and invoices online</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find it easy to check my results online</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.510</td>
<td>.881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d know what to do if I had a problem with my student administration</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMIT effectively resolves any student administration issues I might have</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could easily access information about my program options</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find the online environment useful to communicate with my teachers outside of class</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find the online environment useful to work with other students on group assignments outside of class</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classrooms are well maintained</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture theatres are well maintained</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratories are well maintained</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General access computer labs are well maintained</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.667</td>
<td>.933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lounge spaces are well maintained</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilets are well maintained</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifts are well maintained</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**3.21.2. Convergent validity of Academic Approach**

As a rule of thumb (Guilford, 1967), items with a low factor loading (under .50), should be dropped to obtain a reliable factor structure in the model (Hair, 2006). Therefore, items 3, 8, 10 and 12 of Academic Approach, which had a loading less than .5, were dropped.
In addition, for the factor Academic Approach the strongest indicators were items 5 and 6 followed by items 1 and 4. The value of average variance extracted and the construct reliability of Academic Approach were both appropriate: .564 and .911, respectively (see Table 3.7).

Table 3.7. Convergent Validity of the Measurement Model – Academic Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Factor loading &gt; .5</th>
<th>Average Variance Extracted &gt; .5</th>
<th>Construct Reliability &gt; .7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Approach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teaching staff of this program motivate me to do my best work</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The staff put a lot of time into commenting on my work</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.564</td>
<td>.911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was generally given enough time to understand things I have to learn</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The staff really tried to understand difficulties I might have with the work</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teaching staff normally give me helpful feedback on how I am going</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My lecturers are extremely good at explaining things</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teaching staff work hard to make their courses interesting</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The staff make it clear from the start what they expect from students</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.21.3. Convergent validity of Course Content

Items with low factor loading (under .50), were dropped to obtain a reliable factor structure in the model (Hair, 2006). Therefore, items 2, 5, 9 and 11 of Course Content with a factor loading less than .5 were dropped. In addition, for the factor Course Content the strongest indicators were items 1 and 2 followed by items 3 and 5. The value of average
variance extracted and the construct reliability of Course Content also was appropriate: .598 and .922, respectively (see Table 3.8).

Table 3.8. Convergent Validity of the Measurement Model – Course Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Factor loading &gt; .5</th>
<th>Average Variance Extracted &gt; .5</th>
<th>Construct Reliability &gt; .7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The program develops my problem-solving skills</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The program sharpens my analytic skills</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I usually have a clear idea of where I am going and what is expected of me in this program</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The program helps me develop my ability to work as a team member</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.598</td>
<td>.922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of my program, I feel confident with unfamiliar problems</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The program improves my skills in written communication</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My program helps me develop the ability to plan my own work</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's easy for me to get the information I need about my program</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.21.4. Convergent validity of Student Satisfaction

As Table 3.9 shows, the factor loadings for all items of Student Satisfaction were greater than .50 and, therefore they were accepted. For the factor Student Satisfaction, the strongest indicators were items 5 and 8 followed by items 6 and 4. The value of the average variance extracted and construct reliability for Satisfaction were also appropriate: .648 and .936, respectively (See Table 3.9).
Table 3.9. Convergent Validity of the Measurement Model – Student Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Factor loading &gt; .5</th>
<th>Average Variance Extracted &gt; .5</th>
<th>Construct Reliability &gt; .7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Support 1- Library</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Support 2- Computing Facilities</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Support 3- Services</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Services</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services and Programs for Students</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMIT Link</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Union</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.21.5. Convergent validity of Student Retention

As Table 3.10 shows that the factors loading for all items of Student Retention were greater than .50, therefore they were accepted. In addition, for the factor Student Retention the strongest indicator was item 4 followed by items 1 and 6. The value of average variance extracted and the construct reliability of retention also was appropriate: .64 and .955, respectively.
Table 3.10. Convergent Validity of the Measurement Model – Student Retention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Factor loading &gt; .5</th>
<th>Average Variance Extracted &gt; .5</th>
<th>Construct Reliability &gt; .7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Retention</td>
<td></td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMIT generally responds well to student feedback</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I have the opportunity to undertake further studies in the future, I would like to study again at RMIT</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As an RMIT graduate I will be highly employable</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At RMIT there are enough activities to develop my skills outside of my program</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can balance my studies with my work and home commitments</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have enough opportunities to discuss my academic work with teaching staff</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have enough opportunities to work with other students in my program</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have enough contact with students in other programs</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The RMIT campus is a good place to spend time outside classes</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMIT is friendly to people from all backgrounds</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel personally safe on campus</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am treated fairly at RMIT</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the discriminant validity of the measures, as shown in Table 3.10, all were acceptable because the correlation coefficients between the constructs of the measurement model were less than 0.9 (Hair, 2006).

3.22. Qualitative Research

Using quantitative and qualitative methods in tandem addresses the weaknesses of each approach. Quantitative methods allow for more systematic or standardised findings of patterns and statistical relationships, while qualitative methods allow more nuanced and
detailed findings that take into account subjective experiences and interpretations (Adler & Clark, 2003; Byrman & Teevan, 2005).

3.23. Sample Selection

The second part of this investigation was a qualitative study, drawing on data from interviews with international undergraduate students recruited through a purposeful sample aimed at maximising sample variation. A sample is considered to be purposeful when a researcher deliberately identifies and selects individuals who have experience with the major topic (John W Creswell & Clark, 2007) and when the researcher wants to “learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose” of the research (Michael Quinn Patton, 1987, P. 52). A total of 21 international students agreed to participate in the interviews. From this group, 13 who had experience with the topic (internationalised curriculum) were selected to participate in the interviews. This selection was due to some students being uncomfortable with the interview being recorded, which was required for the interviewer to properly understand and document findings. Also, some students who expressed their interest were master’s-level students and the target population of this research was undergraduate students. Participants were selected from different schools, fields of study and nationalities.

3.24. Interviews

The interviews were conducted with the goal of clarifying the results from the quantitative research as well as identifying factors that might influence student retention, but were not found in the quantitative research. The interview combined an informal
conversational interview with a semi-structured approach (Appendix C), with each lasting approximately one hour. The researcher focused his questions on issues raised in the analysis of the quantitative data. Interviews began with general questions and moved into specific questions regarding objectives of the study.

The conversations were moderated toward the scope of the research questions by using a pre-determined Interview Guiding Questions Form; however, the interviewees were given the opportunity to share anything that they thought was relevant. This allowed interviewees to expand on different issues and recount pertinent experiences.

The style of exploratory semi-structured interviews promotes flexibility, comfort, and rapport highlighting many advantages (Creswell and Miller 2000; Hagan 2003), such as “being on the scene” (Hagan 2003) and making notes on impressions we had of the participant and his surrounding environment (Goffman 1967).

3.2.5. Data Collection

By distributing an initial flyer (Appendix D) around the university and faculties, including popular areas such as restaurants, libraries and prayer rooms, I asked for international undergraduate students to participate in an interview as volunteers. Through snowball recruitment and networking, I gave out a one page invitation (Appendix E) to international undergraduate students to be interviewed to explore internationalised curriculum factors leading to student retention. A total of 21 international students agreed to participate in the interviews. From this group, 13 students were interviewed. All participants were students of RMIT University at the time of the study. The conversations were carried out as a one-on-one dialogue. Participants were provided with the interview questions and it was made clear
that they were under no obligation to be interviewed. I negotiated a time and place convenient to the interviewees to conduct the interview. All interviews were conducted on campus, using the English language, and were digitally recorded with the interviewees’ permission. Written consent forms were given to participants (Appendix F) so that their voluntary consent was obtained before the interview started.

Participants’ confidentiality was also maintained throughout the process as proscribed by the informed consent policies and procedures of RMIT University. No identifying information about the participants, such as name and student number, was solicited during data collection. Subjects were asked for their email address if they were willing to participate in an individual interview activity. These email addresses were only used for contact purposes and were not associated with their interview data. The names of interviewees were kept confidential and substituted with pseudonyms in the study reports.

3.26. Data Analysis

For this study, the researcher analysed the data following guidelines proposed by Creswell (2003). The qualitative process of data analysis is an inductive one. The data is examined from a bottom-up approach (John W Creswell, 2005), which means that the data is examined to identify general themes using the following steps:

Step 1: The data were organised and transcribed. Transcribing allows the interview data to be formatted into a usable form as well let the researcher hear the data repeatedly as it is being transcribed.

Step 2: A preliminary exploratory analysis was completed. This step consisted of reading the transcript multiple times to identify themes emerging from the data.
Step 3: The themes emerging from the data were connected to the research purpose. For this study, the major research purpose was to examine the relationship existing between the internationalised curriculum, international students’ satisfaction with the internationalised curriculum provided by the institution and international student retention. Data were categorised into three broad themes with sub-categories. The three broad themes included internationalised curriculum, international students’ satisfaction and international student retention. Then the data were coded according to theme and sub-category. For example, the code 1 was used to identify the theme of internationalised curriculum and the code 1.1 for the first sub-category international subject (see Table 3.11).

Step 4: To ensure reliability of the coding scheme, it is valuable to have another’s perspective. Therefore, the researcher asked two students to assist him. Each person coded the data separately. Then the results were shared and any differences were discussed and clarified.

Step 5: The data were reviewed within the themes and sub-categories, and an understanding of each theme was reached. Results were then compared for similarities, differences, and any general shared tendencies.
Table 3.11. Dominant Themes, Related Subcategories and Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Internationalised curriculum</td>
<td>1.1 Curricula with international subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2 Preparing students for international professions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3 Course Content is appropriate for international students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.4 Teaching methods at international level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Satisfaction</td>
<td>2.1 Students’ pre-university experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2 Students’ positive experience of studying at RMIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2.1 Courses of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2.2 Lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2.3 Support Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3 Students’ negative experience of studying at RMIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3.1 English as a second language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3.2 Accent, knowledge and skills of lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3.3 Cultural difference and interact with local people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3.4 Financial Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3.5 Personal Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Retention</td>
<td>3.1 Goal commitments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2 Institutional commitments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.3 Continuing to study at RMIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.4 Recommend RMIT to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.5 Factors causing students’ drop out along with recommendations to retain them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.27. Ethical Issues

One of the most important parts of every research study is the consideration of ethical issues. The process of research creates tension between the objectives of the research and the rights of participants to maintain privacy. Ethics pertains to doing well and avoiding harm. Harm can be prevented or reduced through the application of appropriate ethical principles. Thus, the protection of human subjects or participants in any research study is imperative.
Several steps were taken to ensure that the participants of the study would not be harmed in any way. The researcher submitted the application form provided by the College of Human Ethics Advisory Network for review of Negligible and Low Risk Research. After reviewing the application by the College of Human Ethics Advisory Network and fulfilling all requirements, the researcher received approval from the Design and Social Context College Human Ethics Advisory Network as a sub-committee of the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee.

By getting ethical approval, there were some responsibilities that I as a researcher should consider before, during and after my research and data collection. These responsibilities include advertising for volunteers for interviews, distribution of questionnaires, consideration of interviewees’ privacy, and confidentiality of all data and information.

Because mixed methods research was used in this study, ethical issues have to be considered for both quantitative and qualitative data collection. Because secondary data were used for the quantitative research, I communicated with the Survey Service Centre of RMIT University under the direction of my supervisor. After evaluation of my request, the confidentiality forms provided by RMIT University’s Survey Service Centre were signed. Then I was allowed access to quantitative data from course experience survey, student experience survey, and RMIT graduate survey.

For the qualitative data collection using was semi-structured face-to-face interviews, I invited thirteen international undergraduate students to participate in interviews. These students were provided with the interview questions and it was made clear that they were
under no obligation to be interviewed. They were asked to contact me by telephone or email if they wished to be interviewed.

I negotiated a time and place convenient to the interviewees and arranged the interview. Interviewees were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix F) before beginning the interview. Measures were also taken to protect the confidentiality of the data from any individuals outside the study. The collected data was kept at the office of the researcher’s supervisor in a locked filing cabinet where it will remain for at least five years, and the identities of the participants will not be revealed. In summary, all the necessary procedures were followed to ensure that the rights of the participants were protected.
Chapter 4. Findings

4.1. Results

This chapter reports the findings of the statistical analyses of data from the 2012 Higher Education Onshore – Student Experience Survey conducted by the Survey Services Centre at RMIT University, as well as findings from the interviews with 13 international students. The results are presented in two sections: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative section includes descriptive statistics from international undergraduate students’ demographic data and results of the SEM to test the hypotheses related to the proposed model and the effects of the four determinants (Academic Approach, Course Content, Teaching Method 1 and Teaching Method 2) on Student Retention. The quantitative results also include testing for an indirect relationship between Internationalised Curriculum and Student Retention that is mediated through students’ satisfaction. The qualitative section includes descriptive statistics from international students’ gender, nationality and field of study and an interpretation of the interview data based on the dominant themes and related sub-categories.

4.2. Quantitative Research findings

4.2.1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Of the 2,421 international undergraduate students, 432 incomplete questionnaires were dropped from the analysis leaving 1,989 questionnaires in the final analysis. Table 4.1 shows the academic schools of the 1,989 respondents who fully completed the questionnaire. Responses received from the survey, the highest number of respondents was from the School
of Media and Communication, at 216 (10.9%), along with the School of Architecture and Design, with 214 (10.8%) responses. Around 9.4% were majoring in Aerospace, Mechanical, Manufacturing, Engineering, and 9.3% of the respondents were studying Computer Science and Information Technology as well as Economics, Finance and Marketing. The percentage of accounting students was 8.2%, followed by 6% from Management, along with Civil, Environmental and Chemical Engineering majors. Just about 0.7% of the students were majoring in Art and Fashion.

Table 4.1. Academic Schools of the International Undergraduate Students in RMIT University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aerospace, Mechanical, Manufacturing, Engineering</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Sciences</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture and Design</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business IT and Logistics</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil, Environmental and Chemical Engineering</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science and Information Technology</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic, Finance and Marketing</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical and Computer Engineering</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion and Textiles</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global, Urban and Social Studies</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical and Geospatial Sciences</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media and Communication</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Sciences</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property, Construction and Project Management</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1989</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3. Correlations between Each Pair of Variables

In this section, correlations between variables involved in the model are examined. Table 4.2 shows the cross-correlation matrix of Pearson’s correlation coefficients between each pair of variables. As shown below: Academic approach and international students’ retention was significantly and positively correlated at the 0.01 level \([r=0.68, p<0.01]\). Based on Guilford Rules of Thumb (1967), the strength of relationship also was moderate: ranging from (0.40-0.70). Course Content and international students’ retention was significantly and positively correlated at the 0.01 level \([r=0.71, p<0.01]\). Based on Guilford Rules of Thumb (1967), the strength of relationship also was high: ranging from (0.70-0.90). Teaching Method 1 and international students’ retention was significantly and positively correlated at the 0.01 level \([r=0.83, p<0.01]\). Based on Guilford Rules of Thumb (1967), the strength of relationship also was high: ranging from (0.70-0.90). Teaching Method 2 and international students’ retention was significantly and positively correlated at the 0.01 level \([r=0.78, p<0.01]\). Based on Guilford Rules of Thumb (1967), the strength of relationship also was high: ranging from (0.70-0.90). Academic Approach and international students’ satisfaction was significantly and positively correlated at the 0.01 level \([r=0.63, p<0.01]\). Based on Guilford Rules of Thumb (1967), the strength of relationship also was moderate: ranging from (0.40-0.70). Course Content and international students’ satisfaction was significantly and positively correlated at the 0.01 level \([r=0.64, p<0.01]\). Based on Guilford Rules of Thumb (1967), the strength of relationship also was moderate: ranging from (0.70-0.90). Teaching Method 1 and international students’ satisfaction was significantly and positively correlated at the 0.01 level \([r=0.86, p<0.01]\). Based on Guilford Rules of Thumb (1967), the strength of relationship also was high: ranging from (0.70-0.90). Teaching Method 2 and international students’ satisfaction was significantly and positively correlated at the 0.01 level \([r=0.78, p<0.01]\). Based on Guilford Rules of Thumb (1967), the strength of relationship also was high: ranging from (0.70-0.90).
was significantly and positively correlated at the 0.01 level \[r=.75, p<.01\]. Based on Guilford Rules of Thumb (1967), the strength of relationship also was high: ranging from (0.70-0.90). Students’ satisfaction with internationalised curriculum and their retention was significantly and positively correlated at the 0.01 level \[r=.895, p<.01\]. Based on Guilford Rules of Thumb (1967), the strength of relationship also was high: ranging from (0.70-0.90). The four components of Internationalised Curriculum (Academic Approach, Course Content and Teaching Method 1 and Teaching Method 2) were all positively correlated with Student Satisfaction and Student Retention. Except for the moderate correlation between Academic Approach and Student Satisfaction, the strength of the correlations between all other variables was high. The correlation between Student Satisfaction and Student Retention \((r = .872)\) was the strongest relationship identified between the variables, followed by the correlation between Teaching Method 1 and Student Satisfaction \((r=.863)\) and the correlation between Teaching Method 1 and Student Retention \((r = .832)\).

Table 4.2 Cross-Correlation Matrix of Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Approach</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Content</td>
<td>0.853**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Method 1</td>
<td>0.599**</td>
<td>0.625**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Method 2</td>
<td>0.506**</td>
<td>0.546**</td>
<td>0.704**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.630**</td>
<td>0.640**</td>
<td>0.863**</td>
<td>0.753**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Retention</td>
<td>0.68**</td>
<td>0.714**</td>
<td>0.832**</td>
<td>0.783**</td>
<td>0.872**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sig at \(\alpha= .01\)
4.4. SEM to Predict Student Retention

This section discusses the path analysis process with latent constructs to investigate the mediation, direct and indirect structural relationship between variables. As shown in Figure 4.1, the structural model indicates that, except for the chi-square statistic, all the fit indices indicated a good fit to the model ($\chi^2 = 9986.836$, $df = 1500$, $P$ value < .001, goodness-of-fit index = .944, adjusted goodness-of-fit index = .936, comparative fit index = .954, incremental fit index = .954, root mean square error of approximation = .025). Because the chi-square statistic is sensitive to sample size, if other fit indices provided a perfect model fit, the result of this index can be neglected (Hair, 2006). Student Retention was hypothesised to be influenced by four predictors: Academic Approach, Course Content, Teaching Method 1 and Teaching Method 2. The four predictors were considered exogenous (independent) constructs and Student Retention was considered an endogenous (dependent) construct. The model consisted of six latent variables (dependent, mediator and independent variables) and 41 measured variables, including 7 indicators of Academic Approach, 6 indicators of Course Content, 7 indicators of Teaching Method 1, 6 indicators of Teaching Method 2, 5 indicators of Student Satisfaction and 10 indicators of Student Retention.

The posited model presented in Figure 4.1, shows that for the Academic Approach factor, the strongest indicators were items 5 and 6 (“The teaching staff normally give me helpful feedback on how I am going” and “My lecturers are extremely good at explaining things”), followed by item 1 (“The teaching staff of this program motivate me to do my best work”) and item 4 (“The staff really tried to understand difficulties I might have with the work”). For the Course Content factor, the strongest indicators were items 1 and 2 (“The program develops my problem-solving skills” and “The program sharpens my analytic
skills”), followed by item 3 (“I usually have a clear idea of where I am going and what is expected of me in this program”) and item 5 (“As a result of my program, I feel confident with unfamiliar problems”). For the Teaching Method 1 factor, the strongest indicator was item 6 (“I could easily access information about my program options”) followed by items 5 (“RMIT University effectively resolves any student administration issues I might have”) and 7 (“I find the online environment useful to communicate with my teachers outside of class”). For the Teaching Method 2 factor, the strongest indicator was item 11 (“Laboratories are well maintained”), followed by items 13 (“Lounge spaces are well maintained”) and 10 (“Lecture theatres are well maintained”).

As shown in Table 4.3, regarding hypothesis one, the main effects model revealed that all components of Internationalised Curriculum had significant associations with Student Retention. The specific hypotheses are discussed as follows:

The relationship between Academic Approach and Student Retention was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.104; \text{C.R.} = 2.804, p < 0.05$); therefore, hypothesis H1.1 was supported.

The relationship between Course Content and Student Retention was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.120; \text{C.R.} = 3.145, p < 0.05$); therefore, hypothesis H1.2 was supported.

The relationship between Teaching Method 1 and Student Retention was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.224; \text{C.R.} = 5.621, p < 0.001$); therefore, hypothesis H1.3 was supported.
The relationship between Teaching Method 2 and Student Retention was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = .224$; C.R. = 8.834, $p < 0.001$); therefore, hypothesis H1.4 was supported.

Regarding hypothesis two, the main effects model revealed that, except for the relationship between Course Content and Student Satisfaction, the three other components of internationalised curriculum had statistically significant relationships with Student Satisfaction. The specific hypotheses are discussed as follows:

The relationship between Academic Approach and Student Satisfaction was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.11$; C.R. = 2.95, $p < .05$); therefore, hypothesis H2.1 was supported.

The relationship between Course Content and Student Satisfaction was positive and non-significant ($\beta = 0.042$; C.R. = 1.031, $p = .3$); therefore, hypothesis H2.2 was not supported.

The relationship between Teaching Method 1 and Student Satisfaction was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.57$; C.R. = 17.80, $p < 0.001$); therefore, hypothesis H2.3 was supported.

The relationship between Teaching Method 2 and Student Satisfaction was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.26$; C.R. = 10.86, $p < 0.001$); therefore, hypothesis H2.4 was supported.

Regarding hypothesis three, and based on the standard regression weights in the structural path model, Student Satisfaction was positively associated with retention ($\beta = 0.37$ C.R. = 8.43, $p < 0.001$); therefore, hypothesis H3 can be accepted.
The final model indicated that 83% of the variance in Student Retention was explained by Internationalised Curriculum and Student Satisfaction. In addition, Internationalised Curriculum explained 79% of the variance in Student Satisfaction (See Figure 4.1).

Table 4.3. Results of Hypothesis Testing and Regression Weights from the SEM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>C.R.</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Satisfaction &lt;--- Teaching Method 1</td>
<td>.573</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>17.842</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Satisfaction &lt;--- Teaching Method 2</td>
<td>.269</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>10.860</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Satisfaction &lt;--- Academic Approach</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>2.953</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Satisfaction &lt;--- Course content</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>1.031</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Retention &lt;--- Teaching Method 1</td>
<td>.224</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>5.621</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Retention &lt;--- Teaching Method 2</td>
<td>.224</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>8.834</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Retention &lt;--- Academic Approach</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>2.804</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Retention &lt;--- Course content</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>3.145</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Retention &lt;--- Student Satisfaction</td>
<td>.366</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>8.439</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** Sig at $\alpha = .001$
Figure 4.1. Estimated path coefficients of the hypothesised model.
The results are tailored for reporting the direct, indirect and total effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable in the model (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4. Direct, Indirect and Total Effects of Latent Exogenous Variables on Student Retention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exogenous Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Method 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Method 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5. Bootstrapping Method to Test the Indirect Effect of Internationalised Curriculum on Student Retention through Student Satisfaction

The fourth hypothesis was to determine whether Student Satisfaction mediates the relationship between Internationalised Curriculum and Student Retention. Bootstrapping based on 1,000 samples (typically at least 1,000 but some authors such as Hayes, Preacher, and Myers (2009) recommended at least 5,000) was used to derive a bias-corrected 95% confidence interval for the indirect effects of Internationalised Curriculum on Student Retention through Student Satisfaction. Teaching Method 1, Teaching Method 2 and Academic Approach had significant indirect effects on Student Retention.

Table 4.5 shows that, except for the indirect effect of Course Content on retention (β = 0.015, p = .3), the bootstrapped estimate of the indirect effects of Teaching Method 1 (β = 0.21, p < .05), Teaching Method 2 (β = 0.098, p < .05) and Academic Approach (β = 0.042, p
< .05) on Student Retention is statistically significant. Therefore, the bootstrapped estimate of the mediated effect is statistically significant for the effects of Teaching Method 1, Teaching Method 2 and Academic Approach on Student Retention.

Table 4.5. Standardised Indirect Effects – Bias-Corrected 95% Confidence Interval (Group number 1 – Default model)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Point Estimate</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Bootstrapping C Percentile 95% CI</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Upper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Method 1*</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.150</td>
<td>.278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Method 2*</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Approach*</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Content</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>-.019</td>
<td>.054</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BC – Bias Corrected, *p < .05

4.6. Qualitative Research Findings

After analysis of the quantitative data, the second stage of the study, the qualitative phase, was undertaken at RMIT University. The main objective of the interviews was to expand on the key findings of the survey and to further investigate some of the unexpected results arising from the survey (John W. Creswell, 2003).

Conclusions are also drawn after integrating the information from both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study (Morse, 1991). Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted to explore the thoughts, opinions and experiences of
international undergraduate students who were studying at RMIT University. The questions that were the basis of these interviews are presented in Appendix C.

4.7. Description of the Interviewees

The participants were 13 international undergraduate students comprising 3 males and 10 females of varying nationalities and fields of study. Their countries of origin were China (3), Singapore (1), Pakistan (1), Malaysia (1), India (3), the United Arab Emirates (1), Samoa (1), Sri Lanka (1) and Hong Kong (1). Seven of the students were from the School of Education, one from Accounting, two from Medical Sciences, one from Civil, Environmental and Chemical Engineering and two from Aerospace (see Table 4.6).
Table 4.6. Characteristics of the Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Field of Study</th>
<th>School of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Bachelor of Early Childhood</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Singaporean</td>
<td>Bachelor of Primary Education</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Bachelor of Accounting</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Bachelor of Aviation Engineering</td>
<td>Aerospace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>Bachelor of Chemical Engineering</td>
<td>Civil, Environ &amp; Chemical Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Bachelor of Laboratory Medicine</td>
<td>Medical Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Bachelor of Primary Education</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Bachelor of Laboratory Medicine</td>
<td>Medical Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Emirates</td>
<td>Bachelor of Aviation Engineering</td>
<td>Aerospace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Bachelor of Early Childhood</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Samoa</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Bachelor of Early Childhood</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Capital letters were used in place of real names.

4.8. Thematic Analysis and Discussion

The researcher distributed the results of the quantitative analyses to the interview participants to review the results and write their opinions. These results serve to inform our understanding of the issues raised by each hypothesis and each research question individually. The significant, representative and contradictory statistical data from the survey were used to create the interview questions. Participants were asked questions to draw out their views of the faculty in fostering internationalisation, assessment of student satisfaction and retention along with the impact of internationalised curriculum on student
retention. The researcher examined the written responses and grouped them according to the major themes that emerged from the data. Each theme was also broken into subcategories in order to make it easier to interpret. The three major themes and their subcategories were as follows:

1. Internationalised curriculum
   1.1 Curricula with international subjects
   1.2 Preparing students for international professions
   1.3 Course content is appropriate for international students
   1.4 Teaching methods at international level

2. Student Satisfaction
   2.1 Students’ pre-university experience
   2.2 Students’ positive experience of studying at RMIT University
      2.2.1 Courses of study
      2.2.2 Lecturer
      2.2.3 Support services
   2.3 Students’ negative experience of studying at RMIT University
      2.3.1 English as a second language
      2.3.2 Accent, knowledge and skills of lecturer
      2.3.3 Cultural difference and interact with local people
      2.3.4 Financial issues
      2.3.5 Personal issues

3. Student’s Retention
   3.1 Goal commitments
3.2 Institutional commitments
3.3 Continuing to study at RMIT University
3.4 Recommend RMIT University to others
3.5 Factors causing students’ drop out, along with recommendations to retain them

4.8.1. Theme one: Internationalised curriculum

Curricula with international subjects. As discussed in the literature review, an internationalised curriculum has an international orientation in content that is aimed at preparing students for performing (both professionally and socially) in an international and multicultural context, and is designed for domestic students as well as international students (Bremer & van der Wende, 1995).

In response to the question, “Has RMIT University offered you an internationalised curriculum dealing with international subjects?” the majority of respondents agreed that curricula at RMIT University are internationalised; a few believed that curricula was not international or partly internationalised. Eleven out of 13 interviewees emphasised that RMIT University offers curricula dealing with international subjects. They rationally justified that the internationalised curriculum covers international subjects as well. They described their feelings about international subjects, bringing up terms such as international, Westernised, or not Australianised for subjects offered by the university.

Of those who regarded the curricula at RMIT University as being internationalised, some saw this as an initiative that the university had undertaken, whereas others believed that internationalisation is inherent in the curricula. For example, [E] from China, who is studying education, noted that, “the world is now connected” and she can apply the
information that she has learned in her country. Another student, [G] from India, said that, “RMIT University wants to create an international atmosphere by accepting students from different countries so the university is internationalised”. For [H], also from India, curricula at RMIT University are interesting. She believed that the curricula are not Australianised. She was studying in the Bachelor of Primary Education course, and when asked about curricula at RMIT University she said, “There is a lot of concentration on kids with different nationalities (in my subjects). I can apply my knowledge back in India as the course gives us room for our personal development and research. It’s very open that way”. A student, [I], from India said:

As far as I know, when I was studying in India we only studied what is going on in India but since I came to Australia, I came to know the scenario of what is going around the whole world. The units I am doing do specify what is going on both in Australia and Europe. For example we do have international case studies.

A final semester student, [G], said:

The content of my studies, yes, it is internationalised. I can say the same principle applies everywhere, my country may not have the same advanced facilities but I can apply the information I studied in there. Also the case studies that we do are internationalised, so when I decide to go back to my country or somewhere else I will be familiar with different scenarios in anywhere around the world.

A student, [H], from India mentioned that, “We consider different nationalities in the case studies or subjects that we study. We need to take into consideration different international subjects and issues as well. So it’s not just an Australianised subject.”
The international students, who believe that internationalisation is inherent in the curriculum, argued that everywhere mathematics is mathematics, and numbers are numbers. For example, [I] from India who was studying Laboratory Medicine said, “Most of the subjects are same as in India. Once I have been accepted to RMIT University, they offered to me some subject exemptions and I continued my study in bio-chemistry at RMIT University exactly like India. So yes, I think the subjects and the curricula are internationalised.” A student from Malaysia, [F], who is studying chemical engineering said, “The lectures and curricula are internationalised because we can apply our studying in any country”. Another interviewee from Pakistan, [C], said:

I haven’t been to another country to apply my knowledge there, but when I speak to my friends or family members, I can see that what we are learning can be applied to any country or any situation. In Australia we use international standards; therefore, whatever we learnt we can apply anywhere.

But [B] from Singapore had her own argument. She said, “Yes, it is internationalised in terms of the course of study but I think some of the topics are mostly Australian with Victorian standard. Perhaps it is 80% national, 20% international, depending of the area of the study”. Some other international students had the same idea. They believed that in some fields of study, curricula are not international or are only semi-international. For example, [D] from Sri Lanka, who is studying Aviation Engineering, believed that 60% of his curricula are internationalised but 40% are localised. A student, [A], from China stated, “I am studying in early childhood; my course is localised, all subjects I am studying are related to the Australian society, I am sure I cannot apply my knowledge in China”. Another student, [K], from China said, “I am wasting my time and money in
Australia. Nothing of whatever I learnt in university is applicable in my country.” She added, “I think I can only work here [in Australia] because the teaching style here in schools is really different to China”. A student, [M], from Hong Kong who has been in Australia since Year 10 of high school and is studying the Bachelor of Education in early childhood stated, “I have to complete Victorian Curriculum, using the information I learnt. This cannot be applied to China”.

In conclusion, the typical reasons for international students who believe that the curriculum offered by university is internationalised can be summarised as follows:

- The students’ knowledge is applicable globally
- The university has an internationalised atmosphere
- The international nature of some courses
- The similarity of courses between RMIT University and overseas universities.

**Preparing students for international professions.** There is a general confidence among international students regarding international professions. When asked whether RMIT University provides curricula that prepares students for international professions, most of interviewees believed that they can find a job anywhere around the world, although a few were concerned about their future.

A student, [C], from Pakistan mentioned, “All the subjects I am taking make sense to me and I am sure I can work anywhere, as well as in Australia. It discusses about taxation of different countries like Hong Kong. They are preparing us for work everywhere”. Another student, [E] from China said, “About jobs, I feel secure, as the contents we have learnt are applicable to other places”. In explaining this feeling of security, she said, “I selected a placement in China, in my hometown. In the placement I
applied my knowledge from Australia and the parents and other workers accepted it and were really happy about it”.

A student, [F], from Malaysia explained how internships and getting a job offer are linked. He believed that when students work in companies as interns, they have opportunities for exposure to companies located around Australia, and some of them are international. He stated that:

They are really helpful; when the university introduced me as an intern to the company, the name of RMIT university behind me will give me credit, then in the future when I am looking for job everywhere around the world I can put the name of those companies in my resume, which gives me confidence.

Likewise, [G] from India, had high levels of confidence when expressing her feelings about her future. She said:

I am confident in finding a job anywhere around the world in this field, as in our field we meet students with different cultures. With Australia being multi-cultural, the education at RMIT is leading us and preparing us for working internationally. My course has been accredited by The Institute of Biomedical Science so it means I am given the opportunity to work in any laboratory in any other country.

A student, [J], from the United Arab Emirates and studying Aviation engineering believed that he has job opportunities immediately available to him after graduation with Emirates Airline, one of the best airlines in the world. Another student, [D] from Sri Lanka, claimed that, “For working around the world you have to know rules and regulations and in RMIT we are referred to international rules and regulations, so I can work overseas.”
On the other hand, there were a few students who believed that they would not have the opportunity to work in their countries. Two students, [K] and [M], from China who were studying early childhood education believed that they wouldn’t have much opportunity to work in their country; [K] said, “I think I can only work here because the schools are really different between teaching style in Australia and China, or if I was very lucky I can work in international school in China, but I am not sure”. Also, [M] said “I think this course is made for local students as the content is on how to teach and conduct in Australia. Using the information I learnt cannot be applied to China”.

In conclusion, 11 of the 13 international students believe that they are prepared to work in international environment or anywhere around the world. The most frequent terms that they use to express their feeling were as follows:

- Courses are accredited by international organisations
- Secured job opportunities
- Placement can guarantee jobs
- Preparing for international professions.

Course content is appropriate for international students. In response to the question of whether RMIT University provides appropriate course content for international students, most of the interviewees were extremely positive about the new learning opportunities that they had through studying at RMIT University. They spoke about course content that addressed global issues and improved their critical thinking skills with an international dimension. One student commented that successful completion of the course in RMIT University could lead to an international qualification; [E] From China said, “For me, studying Australian content is very important. I can’t do that in China. Everything is
totally different here.” She explained further, “I think I’ve got what I need to get through RMIT University. Our course produces globally aware and international graduates.”

Another student, [C], from Pakistan mentioned, “Basics are basics! The basics cannot be changed around the world; however, when I look at my discipline the materials improve our critical thinking skills and train us to function within an international environment.”

A student from Samoa, [L], mentioned that, “RMIT University normally uses all sorts of international or intercultural dimension in its courses”; and [F] from Malaysia believed that when students study at RMIT University, their job eligibility will be guaranteed anywhere, saying, “I think the professional practices with international standards determine the course objectives in RMIT University, so, we will be qualified around the world if we complete our course successfully”. A student from India, [G], also supposed, “My course has been accredited by the Institute of Biomedical Science, so it means I am given the opportunity to work in any laboratory in any other country”.

In conclusion, the international students who believe that RMIT University provides appropriate course content for international students referred to the following:

- Course content provides new learning opportunities
- It addresses global issues in course content
- Course content is based on professional practices with international standards
- It meets the needs of international students
- The course is recognised by international accrediting bodies
- The course leads to an international qualification
- It improves critical thinking skills with an international dimension.
Teaching methods at international level. In response to the question of whether RMIT University provides a teaching method at an international level, [F] from Malaysia said, “My mathematical lecturer often utilises international publications in teaching”, A student, [L], from Samoa spoke about her experience of a good teaching method. She said:

At the School of Education, most lecturers encourage us to use information from international sources in our tasks. Also we have class discussions most of the time, and both national and international students have the opportunity to discuss about their points of view.

Another student, [M] from Hong Kong, feels that the teaching style of one of her lecturers has been the best experience for her as a student. She said, “Our lecturer uses real life examples as case studies which related to real life situations. It is creative and I feel I get more benefits”. A student, [C], from Pakistan also mentioned, “My lecturers are good at communicating with international students”, and [D] from Sri Lanka who is studying Aviation believed that the best experience he had was that of guest lecturers with international experience. A student, [E], from China said, “I love the way how international students are being treated by lecturers”.

Three students who were studying in the School of Education, [E], [B] and [H], thought that most of their lecturers think globally, consider world learning styles, set up international case studies and encourage research on international topics.

In conclusion, the most common reasons for international students who believed that the RMIT University provides international level teaching methods can be summarised as follows:

- There is a focus on international case studies
- There is encouragement to obtain information from international sources
- There is the use of international publications in teaching
- Encouragement of class discussions about global issues
- Encouragement of research on international topics
- There are guest lecturers with international experience.

4.8.2. Theme two: Student satisfaction

Students often form their judgments of a university based on the services that they receive. Their satisfaction will be one of the most important quality dimensions in that university. Hence, the purpose of this part of interview was to discuss international student satisfaction regarding their higher education experience at RMIT University. This was based on the identification of factors that influence students’ satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the campus experience. The interview questions aimed to explore both negative and positive perceptions during their course of study. At first, the students were asked about their pre-experiences with RMIT University and then to describe how their studies are going now (i.e., their current experiences). The interviewees’ responses about their current experiences were very interesting, with considerable detail of both negative and positive experiences with courses, lecturers and services provided by RMIT University.

Students’ pre-university experience. In response to the question about what attributes of RMIT University attracted international students, there was a general belief that RMIT University is a well-known and highly reputed university in Australia. Most of the international students also mentioned that RMIT University was their only choice because other universities in Melbourne did not offer their preferred course. For example, [E] from China said, “I chose RMIT University because it offers Bachelor of Education, whereas
Melbourne University doesn’t offer [this program], also it is a famous university for its education course”. Another student from China and studying the Bachelor of Education, [K], said, “I think I chose RMIT University because it is famous. I know the best university is Melbourne University but their score requirement is really high and also they don’t offer the Early Education. So I chose RMIT University”. Additionally, [L] from Samoa explained her story, saying, “To be honest [I chose RMIT] because it offered the course I wanted, also RMIT University was the first university to accept my application and it was good”. A student from India, [G], chose RMIT University because she was doing this course in India, and RMIT University offered the same course for her to continue. She also said, “RMIT University is a well-known university”.

The reputation of Australia’s higher education as internationalised and of high standard was recognised by [H] who is Indian but living and working in Kuwait. She said, “When I was working and studying in Kuwait, my lecturers told me Australian education has high standards. I was enticed by the programs, courses and the professional placement arrangements”. Moreover, she mentioned that she originally wanted to go to a university in Sydney, but her friend recommended RMIT University, which had been her second option. A student, [D], from Sri Lanka who was studying Aviation said: “I chose RMIT University, because of its reputation and being one of the few universities offering aviation”. Student [I], who is studying Bachelor of Laboratory Medicine, mentioned that, “I wanted to apply to Deakin University but the particular course I wanted to study was not offered there or in any other university. So I selected RMIT University”. The availability of courses was thus a very important factor affecting the decision of international students to study at RMIT.
Another point that was important to international students, and which affected their choice of university, was placement. Some interviewees commented that, because they are not Australian with local knowledge, RMIT’s arranging of placements is highly valued. As [C] from Pakistan said, “I chose RMIT University because it is known for the work experiences its students have. This will be beneficial in my job applications”.

Another of the most frequent reasons for choosing RMIT University was recommendations by other people, such as friends and agencies. In addition, some students believed that RMIT University is friendlier than other universities. For example, [E] from China said, “Many people had recommended RMIT University to me and told me RMIT’s environment suits my personality, since RMIT University is very flexible”. Similarly, [G] from India said, “RMIT University was recommended by my friends and agent”. A student, [B], from Singapore also believed that RMIT University is less expensive than other universities. She said:

I applied to both Monash University and RMIT University. RMIT University was the first university to reply. Then there were tuition fee differences. Monash was too expensive for me. I compared the coverage of course content and I found them similar. So with RMIT University being equally recognised, and more affordable, I chose it.

The several points that made RMIT University more attractive for international students were as follows:

- It is well-known and has a good reputation (nationally and internationally)
- It might be the only choice due to the diversity of possible course selection available at RMIT
- It is a highly reputed university in the student’s particular field of study
• It has fewer entry requirements
• RMIT University was the first university to accept an application
• It maintains a high standard
• It was recommended by other people such as friends and agencies
• The arrangement of work placements is highly valued
• RMIT University is very flexible
• RMIT University is affordable.

**Students’ positive experience of studying at RMIT University.** Many students in the interview spoke about their positive experiences, with either the campus environment or the programs and support services that the university offered. They were satisfied with the friendly environment of the university and a lot of the social interaction between international and national students outside of their studies. For example, [J] from the United Arab Emirates said, “The praying room is very good and satisfying [to] me; we can communicate with other communities like Christians, we have food with them during Ramadan”. A student from Pakistan, [C], said, “They [RMIT] are not putting any pressures on my life. I found them really helpful”.

**Courses of study.** Regarding positive experience with courses of study, interviewees did not identify any particular course as of special interest in their field of study, but most pointed to two factors, practical placement and group work, that were very important in making a course enjoyable. For example, [M] from Hong Kong said, “I am enjoying the placement because it is practical and I can learn and apply different methods in different situations”. A student, [A], from China also mentioned, “English is not my first language, that’s why I enjoy practical courses which requires less English and theories”. While [L] from
Samoa said, “When I am doing placement it is like applying theories to practice, it makes sense to me and gives me confidence since I am going to work in primary school, and [when] working with children, having confidence is very important”. A student, [J], from the United Arab Emirates who is doing aviation engineering was very satisfied. He said, “I am satisfied with my study, believe me! If you study and keep up with work you will be able to ace it and learn; this semester I am happy”. Another student, [M] from Hong Kong said, “I am learning in the practical placement how to apply different methods in different situations”.

Group work was another aspect of the courses that the students appreciated. For example, [E] from China said, “I really enjoy the group studies; they are really interesting. It is fascinating as everyone can play a role in the project so the load of work is distributed. The fact is that we share and exchange our thoughts and ideas”. While [G] from India said, “I do enjoy the group works as we can make notes and share our views together”.

In summary, interviewees supposed that there was not any particular course they most enjoyed, but they would enjoy a course due to practical placement and group work.

Lecturers. Based on interviewees’ answers, the most prominent reason for the enjoyment of courses was the lecturer. Nearly all the interviewees brought up the importance of lecturers and the significance of their teaching style, as well as their communication with students (especially with international students). As [B] from Singapore said:

Some of the lecturers with their unique teaching style are more liked than others. For example, because of the ability of the lecturer, as they are able to connect their prior knowledge to their current teaching which makes sense and gives us extra information, whereas some lecturers do not show any personal relation to what is being taught and lack of communications.
A student, [F], from Malaysia said, “I am enjoying the biomedical unit of my course, not because of the course, but because the lecturer is accessible, even replying to our emails instantly during holidays or weekends”. Similarly, [I] from India enjoys her humanology course. She said, “My lecturer was amazing. She was friendly with her students and the way she explained things was very clear. My lecturer was well experienced in how to treat international students and teach them in the simplest and least confusing manner”. And [E] from China said, “I love the way international students are being treated by lecturers”.

Student [L] from Samoa spoke of her experience of good teaching methods. She said, “One on one meetings with the lecturer will let you learn about the lecturer, interact with them and discuss issues with them. Sometimes we have difficulty [asking] our questions during the class in front of local students”. A student, [M], from Hong Kong also feels that the teaching style of one of her lecturers has been the best experience for her as a student. She said, “Our lecturer use real life examples as case studies which related to real life situations. It is creative and I feel I get more benefits”. Similarly, [C] from Pakistan said, “I have good experience [with my lecturers], they are good in terms of how they communicate, depending on their own experience, how lenient and how they interact with international students”. Another student, [D] from Sri Lanka, believes that the best experience he had was with guest lecturers. He said, “Bringing more guest lecturers from other companies which help understanding aviation in real sense, lots of explanations and experiences offered by them.” While [F] from Malaysia said, “In my Mathematical class, the way the lecturer gives the solution will be beneficial in facing future problems”.

In summary, nearly all the interviewees brought up following factors as positive points of their lecturers:
- Teaching style
- Ability of the lecturer
- Accessibility of lecturers
- Well experienced lecturers
- Guest lecturers from varied companies.

Support Services. The final positive point of experience relates to the support services provided by RMIT University for international students. Students were asked about the quality of services provided by the university, and in response, most of the interviewees referred to facilities such as the library’s e-resource collection, online course materials, internet access, career services and international student advisory services.

For example, [B] from Singapore was satisfied with the RMIT University website and online portal. She said, “RMIT University website and online portal are so helpful; you can communicate with other students in terms of accommodation or something else”. In addition, [G] from India said, “if we have any difficulties we can go online and ask the student service for help, it is very helpful and I am very happy with that”. While [I] from India said, “The library is very useful as you have lots of information like journals available online; also Lectopia is very useful, I have opportunity to listen to the lecturer times and times”. Another student from India, [H], found value in RMIT’s lecture capture system (Lectopia) as well. She said, “When I don’t attend the lecture because of other exams, Lectopia is very helpful. Even, when we attend the lectures if we don’t understand at the time, the contents are going to be available online so I would go home and listen again”.

Nearly all interviewees believed that practical courses along with a placement, which was compulsory, would put them on track to getting a job offer. For example, [F] from
Malaysia believed that when they were doing their practical part of their course in some companies, their chance of finding a job in that company or similar companies will increase, he said, “the companies’ people are watching us carefully if we do well our job, then they will offer us to stay there, it is very good that we can find job”. Similarly, [H] from India said:

  Whatever we learn in theory we get to apply it to either real life experience or to case studies. Also RMIT University offers placement from the beginning and this would allow the theory and practice to go hand in hand and give us the opportunity to experience working, applying the theory in real life and as a result we can find job easily.

In summary, the points that make international students satisfied are as follows:

- The library’s e-resource collection
- Online course materials
- Internet access
- Career services
- International student advisory services.

**Students’ negative experience of studying at RMIT University.** While the interviews showed that most students were positive about their overall experience, there were some negative points.

*English as a second language.* English as a second language was considered by most of the students as a big issue. For instance, [K] from China was struggling with her English. She said, “So far my studies are good, but I am not happy with my placement because I didn’t pass my first assignment. My lecturer told me my English was not good enough; I need to talk more and be more outgoing”. Another student, [J] from the United Arab Emirates, said, “I
have to improve my English as I have to read topics 2 or 3 times to understand, it is very
difficult and I have to spend plenty of time”. And [M] from China said, “The main concern for
international students is misunderstanding of the content, and again language is as a barrier for
understanding”.

Accent, knowledge and skills of lecturer. Along with English as a second language, the
accent of lecturers was another issue that was of concern to international students. For
example, [I] from India who was studying the Bachelor of Medicine said, “Their strong
accents were the main reason that I couldn’t understand anything in three or four lectures”.
When asked whether she followed up with lecturers to address lack of understanding in this
case, she said, “At first, because back in India we don’t have much communication with our
lecturers. But as I gradually got to know them I began to contact them via email and clarify
things with them and eventually received positive responses”. Another student, [F] from
Malaysia who was studying the Bachelor of Chemical Engineering, said, “One of the obstacles
is my English and [lecturers’ and staff] accents”. And [G] from India mentioned that language
and understanding the accents of lecturers have been two of the main difficulties for her during
her studies. Student [H] from India explained her experience as follows:

There was a professor who used to not complete his sentences which made me really
confused. During that time I did not have a clue what I’m doing, but it was a very
simple class so I didn’t complain much. Her teaching was dry and dull.

Regarding negative experiences of teaching methods, some students believed that
some of their lecturers did not have enough experience or knowledge as a university lecturer.
For example, [B] from Singapore mentioned the lack of consistency of some lecturers. He
said:
I find it very annoying when some of the lectures are not even sure what is expected. Their expectations vary each day and it isn’t consistent. It is very hard for students to follow, as we work on something and the lecturer changes the criteria the next day so we have to spend more time on that again.

Student [E] from China supported this. She said, “I don’t have problems with the method, but some tutors are too changing, changing their requirements now and then which tend to be confusing for some students”. Student [G] From India also stated, “Sometimes the lecturers have difficulties in demonstrating the practical activity, for example, by not being familiar with the new machinery or instrument which disallows me to learn the outcome of the practice taken”.

Two students, [A] from China and [C] from Pakistan, believed that to be motivated by their lecturer is very important; [A] said, “Not much help from the teachers, their lack of communication, personality issues, not responding to our questions and therefore I have to become self-motivated and independent”. While, [C] said, “Some lecturers motivate me negatively because I think they are not exactly prepared for teaching”. Another student, [E] from China, mentioned the role of motivation in her learning. She said, “I thought my English was not good and I wouldn’t be able to get high marks, but I found myself getting HD, D and Credits and doing really exceptional in my studies, I think I just need motivation and encouragements”. Student [L] from Samoa explained her bad experience with one lecturer in the first year of her study. She said, “Lack of confidence of that lecturer was the reason that she couldn’t easily interact with her students, I was disappointed with her interaction with students”.
Cultural differences and interaction with local people. Student [I] from India mentioned the different relationship between lecturers and students in India compared with Australia as a cultural shock. She could not believe that she can have a close relationship with her lecturers in Australia. When asked her about interactions with local students, she said:

I wasn’t really comfortable with locals as I tried my hardest to communicate with the locals but they did not seem interested. I think it’s mainly because of groupism; locals are with locals and internationals with internationals. They are not willing to mix with us but as we tried to interact with them they weren’t friendly and not interested to interact.

Student [K] said, “it is hard to interact with local students and get to know the cultural differences and the language”. Student [D] from Sri Lanka said, “What I found difficult in my study life were language and cultural shock, meaning we wouldn’t be able to tolerate the changes of cultures”.

Financial Issues. Interviewees increased their complaints about cost when they were talking about some services such as accommodation and transportation. For example, [H] from India explained her difficulties by saying:

Living accommodation is one of my difficulties in my study life, I used to live in Preston near Bundoora, but it is really far and I didn’t like to live there as it was boring. I prefer city life although rental price is high, now it takes me 1 hour and 30 minutes. In the city, prices are high but they should lower the rate for at least international students’ accommodation - they don’t even offer concession for trams or trains, I spend $300/$400 every month, it is a lot. The trains/trams are really slow, life
is laid-back and slow, the services we get are really slow so I am not used to it, it might be because of the population of Australia.

Student [E] from China added, “Living here, the rent is so expensive; the study fees are getting higher and higher. Because I don’t work and hence why my parents are paying for me it’s really expensive”. Student [B] who was doing the Bachelor of Early Childhood was very worried about her financial issues. She said:

To help financially, giving us a little concession, we go through a lot to be here as international students so they should understand us and help us in this position For one of my assignments recently I spend $20 in universities’ library just because I had a few coloured images in my assignments. This money could cover my food or other needs.

Student, [H], from India also complained about financial issues. She believed that the university should support international students with, “Concessions for tram/train tickets, paying for books and getting scholarships”. She said, “I don’t mean full scholarship but it would benefit both [the] Australian economy and students, even the bachelor level I think it’s worthier for their hard work”.

A student, [A], from China discussed travelling distance and said, “I am trying to get close to university life but my campus is very far, so I am unable to travel and attend the events held, I have to spend too much money and times and as a result I can’t communicate with my friends too because of the location”.

*Personal Issues.* There were other problems that were seen as issues for individuals and affected their personal lives and studies, such as time management and homesickness. For example, [L] from Samoa, whilst she was happy with her study, was worried about her time
management. She said, “My studies are going good but I am falling behind, I need to listen more carefully, learn and remember what people say to me, I need time management”. Student [G] from India has the same feeling and said:

Sometimes there are so many hard contents to study and we get lots of assignments which we focus on, we don’t really get the time to focus on our notes and prepare for our exams. As an international student we need to complete every task given to us, either exams or assignment, in a high standard. For example, during a semester I had my lab units and its required tasks while I was also having my exams so it was hard for me to decide what to focus on, the time given was very limited, because I am alone here so I didn’t really get the emotional support during such hard time of confusion.

For [G] from India, home-sickness was one of the key concerns facing international students as well as her. She said, “Homesickness is a complex thing, there may be several things contributing to our homesickness but I think adjustment with new life, culture and people are the main reasons for us”.

In conclusion, with regards to student satisfaction, the issues that were of concern to international students can be summarised as follows:

- English as a second language
- Accent of staff
- Accent of lecturers
- Lectures with lack of knowledge
- Lecturers with lack of experiences
- Lecturer with negative behaviour
- Cultural differences
• Communication with the local students
• Expensiveness
• Accommodation
• Travelling distance
• Time management
• Lots of assignments
• Home-sickness
• Ranking of university.

4.8.3. Theme three: Student retention

Students who are satisfied with the curriculum are likely to exert more effort in their educational studies by regularly attending their classes and becoming more involved with their coursework and institution. They are more likely to be committed and continue their studies than unsatisfied students, who are likely to be less willing to regularly attend classes (Borden, 1995; Jamelske, 2009). It is vital for RMIT University administrators and academics to understand retention indicators and provide assistance to international students. The purpose of this part of the interview was to discuss the factors that have an impact on student retention. The questions in this part of the interview aimed to explore student retention in terms of their goals, loyalty to RMIT University and whether they will continue their study at RMIT University or recommend RMIT University to others. In response to the questions, the majority of interviewees (11 out of 13) stated that they will continue their study at RMIT University, but two had different points of view, outlining
reasons for their dissatisfaction as well as making recommendations to policy makers to improve retention of international students.

**Goal commitment.** When the interviewees were asked about the goals that have kept them motivated to continue their university study, the most common answer was to finish their study successfully and to find a good job. Support from university and family also was a significant factor that motivates them in goal commitment.

For example, [A] from China said, “When I started my study, I knew the outcome of studying in this course, now, I am paying so much money but I am happy because of my bright future”. Similarly, [K] from China said, “Thinking about my future, pass all the subjects, graduated and get a job are motivating me. Also, we have to do good study because we are paying so much”. Another student, [J] from the United Arab Emirates, was very excited and motivated. He said:

One of my friends who is 26 or 27, will graduate the next month, he was offered a job after finishing his course in this university. So, because of the reputation of RMIT University, job is guaranteed I guess, but I am planning to go back and work in my country, then all of them are motivating me.

Student [I] from India said, “Getting a RMIT University degree is very important to me because my future job will be guarantee”, and [F] from Malaysia who was studying Bachelor of Chemical Engineering said, “By making decision to study at RMIT University with high reputation I want to become successful professionally and personally in my life”. Student [G] from India said, “I have had many academic successes so far, also my parents like what I have done and encourage me every time”, and [H] from India explained her goal setting as follows,
“I am confident that I made right decision about my field and my university, now it is very important for me to complete my study firstly and finding job secondly”.

In conclusion, the main points of goal commitment for international students were to finish study successfully and finding a good job.

**Institutional commitment.** Regarding the institutional commitment that encouraged interviewees to feel a strong sense of belonging at RMIT University, several factors were mentioned by students. These included education quality, cost of tuition, supportive and friendly environment, and the presence of a large number of international students. For instance, [D] from Sri Lanka said, “RMIT University provides several beneficial opportunities for international students as I mentioned before such as education quality, cost of tuition compare to other universities and also placement, so I am happy with choosing RMIT University and I will continue my attending”. Student [L] from Samoa said, “I am naturally curious about what happen around me, so I try to participate in all of the social and cultural activities at RMIT University for both local and international students”. Student [E], who is a Bachelor of Education student, said, “The course itself is really interesting, also friends and its (university) friendly and convenient environment”. Similar to [E], student [B] from Singapore stated, “My classmates with whom I share a lot of knowledge, and my lecturers always give me opportunity to share what I think and feel making me more feel belonged to RMIT University”. Students [A] from China and [C] from Pakistan believed that large number of international students at RMIT University campus was very important for them to feel comfortable and enjoy university.

In conclusion, the main points of institutional commitment for international students can be summarised as follow:
• University environment
• Work experience opportunities
• The field of study itself is really interesting and motivating me
• Friends and classmates
• Lecturers
• Too many international students.

**Continuing to study at RMIT University.** When the interviewees were asked whether they would like to continue studying at RMIT University, 11 out of the 13 interviewees stated that they will continue their study, but two of them had different points of view. For instance, [C] from Pakistan said, “No I am not going to continue because I am doing the last semester currently. I don’t mind studying in RMIT University but I am looking forward to study in a university with higher rankings”. Student [M] from China said, “I will continue my studies at another university, for personal reasons I will study my masters in China, I want to experience a different university”. Student [B] From Singapore didn’t want to drop out. She said, “Sure, I will continue, but because I am self-funding and it is hard for me to pay the cost, if I don’t be able to cope with the cost I will switch which I hope doesn’t happen. I don’t know what the future holds, depending on how much I sustain”.

**Recommend RMIT University to others.** Regarding recommending RMIT University to other people such as family or friends, all interviewees emphasised that they will recommend RMIT University. The main points about RMIT University to be recommended to others were reputation, quality of teaching, facilities and placements.

For example, student [E] who was studying a Bachelor of Education said:
I will recommend RMIT University because it is well known for my course, social science and designing to whomever wants to study these subjects, but for Medicine subjects such as laboratory medicine I won’t recommend [it], as it is not strong in this course, I will give the right advice to the right person.

Student [L] From Samoa will recommend RMIT University to others because of the lecturers and good quality of teaching, while [F] from Malaysia stated that because he is satisfied with RMIT University, he will recommend to his families and friends. He said, “In my opinion, RMIT University is not exam orientated, they offer work experience so they allow you to develop your skills and because of your skills you can find job easily, I am very happy and definitely will recommend”.

Student [H] who was studying a Bachelor of Primary of Education emphasised that she was going to recommend her course to her friends and families and others. She said, “For my course I am going to recommend it, because of the content of the course you can apply to every student globally also they are making us to think, doing research and applying our own knowledge and experience internationally”. Student [I] who was studying Bachelor of Laboratory Medicine believed that RMIT University supports international students very well. She said, “Yes I will recommend, because they are supporting us very well, if international students have any problems like accommodations or jobs we can share our problems and they will help us to solve it”. Another student, [G] from India, said, “Yes, I will recommend RMIT University to my friends and family members, RMIT University is well known and their teaching system is good, it provides good facilities along with opportunity for students to work overseas”.

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In conclusion, most of the interviewees were going to recommend RMIT University to their families, friends and others. The reasons for recommendation were:

- Well reputed
- Quality of teaching
- Facilities
- Good support
- Focus on workplace experience.

**Factors causing students’ to drop out along with recommendations to retain them.**

The reason for dropping-out was considered by many students during the interviews. They pointed to a variety of issues such as high cost of university, high cost of living, depression, homesickness, language barriers, interest change and difficulty of study. For example, [J] from United Arab Emirates who was studying aviation engineering said:

Some courses such as Aerospace Engineering are challenging and difficult, mainly because of English and studying Engineering in a different language, that’s why some students drop out their study. I believed that if RMIT University supported more international students, which they are not doing now, then those students wouldn’t give up from university.

Another interviewee who observed somebody dropping-out was student [M] from China. She said, “I had a girl starting this year and then she transferred from RMIT University to Monash or Deakin. Education is not easy for everyone so she changed her course and university”. She explained the cause of dropping-out as, “Marking is not the same, sometimes we as international students spend 20 hours to learn or to do our assignments, whereas, local students
spend 3 or 4 hours to finish and this is unfair”; she then recommended, “Lecturers should consider international students’ situation, labelling international student, they should consider that English is not our first language”.

Student [C] from Pakistan also believed that:

Some students drop out because of the difficult nature of the studies, one of my friends went through lots of difficulties with her studies that now she is going through mental and physical issues, so I personally prefer someone to drop-out of their course than quitting their life, for some people it is not easy to deal with life matters. Although, I am not an expert to recommend, I think if anyone wants to quit because he didn’t get good marks, the lectures try to be more understanding and flexible.

Student [B] from Singapore pointed to one of her friends and said:

I have a Bangladeshi friend who wanted to study for higher education in RMIT University but because of the cost, she chose another university offering the same course with lower cost. I believe RMIT University is very expensive. It is hard to afford, controlling the cost by university is best thing to do. Because at the end of the day we as international students are all graduating from Australia, when we go back to our home country everybody knows us as graduated from Australia not RMIT University.

Student [D] from Sri Lanka said, “Students should be given opportunity to drop-out if they do not find their course interesting, we didn’t have enough information and experience about our course before enrolment”.

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Two students, [F] from Malaysia and [G] from India, pointed to English language problems and cultural shock as two of the main reasons for international students’ dropping out. Student [F] said:

I believe, because the culture here and difficulties in communicating due to English, international students don’t have patience to study their course and they do drop out. For stopping drop-out, RMIT University can offer free English classes which are already good and useful, and University can offer counselling for international students. Orientation is helpful but not long enough for students to learn whether they are going to stay in their course or not.

Student [G] from India said, “If any one drops-out I think the reason could be not being able to cope with language, culture and the high fee, my recommendation to RMIT University to stop students’ dropping-out is to support them financially and create a friendly environment”.

Student [L] from Samoa also believed that cultural shock is a cause depression and as a result students will drop-out. She said, “Because of the cultural shock, when I came to Australia I felt quiet strange and lonely and keep everything to myself and not sharing. I think students’ engagement is very important, give them responsibilities, make them join groups and make them involved in different universities’ activities”.

In conclusion, the most frequent reasons that have been expressed by international student about the cause of dropping-out by students were as follows:

- English problems
- No equity between local and international students
- Cost of university and life
- Depression
The most common recommendations to RMIT University for stopping international students’ drop-out were as follows:

- RMIT University has to support more international students
- Labelling international students for more consideration by lecturers
- Lectures should try to be more understanding and flexible
- The cost should be controlled by the university
- Financial support
- Creation of a friendly environment
- Offering a free English class
- Counselling for international students
- Giving international students responsibilities
- Make international students join groups and make them involved in different universities’ activities.

4.9. Impact of Internationalised Curriculum on Student Retention

Regarding the impact of the internationalised curriculum on international student satisfaction and retention, all interviewees stated that they believe that it does have an impact. They concluded that when the curriculum is internationalised, international students will be
satisfied about whatever they learn because it will be applicable wherever in the world they work. They concluded that the result of satisfaction definitely is retention.

Retention was defined for the interviewees as the continuous enrolment of a student in courses in successive semesters until the successful completion of a degree. In this regard, as in the previous question, the interviewees said that they would recommend their university to others. They all stated that they would continue their study until completion of their degree, but some interviewees said that if they do further study they may try another university. For example, [C] from Pakistan said that, “In terms of retention, because I am studying my final year now I would do research on other universities and then will make decision for where to study for my higher education. But if I was in early years of bachelor I would stick with RMIT University”.

Student [E] from China said, “Obviously if I am satisfied with curriculum I am going to continue my current study, but also before I start my masters I will compare Masters of Education in different universities, like Melbourne University, and if it is better and I can afford it I am willing to change.” And student [F] from Malaysia believes that facilities for Master’s and PhD students are not sufficient at RMIT University, but for bachelor students, facilities are good and they are satisfied. He said, “I did think twice for Master and PhD and I did some research, but there are no facilities for master by research and PhD students in RMIT University when you compare with other universities, they don’t offer funds as well”.

Student [H] from India is satisfied with her current course because she believes her course is internationalised and is applicable globally, but for further study she is not sure. She said that, “My course is applicable globally because they are internationalised, for masters I am not sure whether I am going to continue in RMIT University, simply because of the
ranking unless they offer me good degrees. But in general of course if the students are satisfied they will continue their course”.

As a result, regarding the question about the impact of internationalised curriculum on student’s satisfaction and student’s retention, all interviewees believed that the following:

- Internationalised curriculum has impact on student’s satisfaction and student’s retention
- When curricula are internationalised, as a result international students will be satisfied and then they concluded that the result of satisfaction definitely is retention
- All of them stated that they will continue their study until completion of their degree
- If they want continue for further study definitely they will compare their current university with other universities.
Chapter 5. Implications and Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, the relationships between internationalised curriculum, student satisfaction and student retention were analysed using quantitative and qualitative approaches. In this chapter, the implications of these findings are discussed. The purpose and significance of the study are first described and are followed by a discussion of each research question. The three themes that this research is based upon, internationalised curriculum, student satisfaction and student retention are then discussed in detail.

5.2. Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between internationalised curriculum, international student satisfaction with the curriculum and international student retention at RMIT University. There are several justifications for the importance of this study. First, international students are a vital element of universities such as RMIT University and this study has identified the most influential predictors of international student satisfaction with the internationalised curriculum. Second, the findings of this research on the relationship between the internationalised curriculum and international student retention can be the starting point for further research. Third, because internationalisation of the curriculum is one of the most important and influential elements of the internationalisation of higher education, and as internationalising higher education continues to grow, exploring and updating the information
related to the issue is essential. Finally, the results of this study may be of interest to university administrators and governments.

It is important for university administrators and academics to have an understanding of the indicators of international student retention that are based on an internationalised curriculum. In this research, a working definition of curriculum was everything with which students are involved from the beginning of their studies through to their graduation or termination of study. Also, a new definition of retention has been established as:

A student continues his/her study to graduation at the same university with which he/she has enrolled, and also, he/she recommends his/her institute to his/her families or friends for their study. Additionally, if he/she has the opportunity for further study at a higher level, he/she may choose the same university which he/she has already graduated from.

Based on these definitions, the significance of this study is clear, because, under the working definition of curriculum used in this research, everything during the student’s study life has been considered as a factor that can affect student retention.

International students who leave their homes, families and friends to come to Australia to study have different expectations from students who are studying in their home country. This is because they believe that they can receive greater benefits by studying abroad than by studying in their home country. They have expectations that the university that they enrol in, such as RMIT University, will provide an internationalised curriculum that will benefit them beyond their studies. Research on the main elements of curriculum, which in this study are academic approach, teaching methods and course content, can give insight to academics and
administrators of institutes to assist in the creation of a satisfactory level of curriculum for international students that will satisfy them and subsequently retain them.

This research has identified aspects of the curriculum that are important to international students at RMIT University. The role of an internationalised curriculum is paramount because the main goals of international students can be to return to their home country, stay in Australia or to move to another country to find a job. When study is based on an internationalised curriculum, international students can prepare for real life and work anywhere worldwide.

5.3. Findings

In this study, the researcher addressed four research questions based on the data collected using a mixed methods approach. Data for this study were collected by the RMIT University Survey Service Centre and through face-to-face interviews that were conducted by the researcher.

A sequential explanatory mixed methods design was used. It consisted of two distinct phases: quantitative followed by qualitative (John W Creswell & Clark, 2007). The rationale for this approach is that the analysis of the quantitative data provides a general understanding of the research questions. The analysis of the qualitative data refines and explains the quantitative results by exploring participants’ views in more depth (John W. Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). I will now address the research findings of this study relating to each of the four research questions.
5.3.1. Research question one: What is the relationship between the internationalised curriculum and international students’ retention?

Statistical analysis of the quantitative data has shown that all components of the Internationalised Curriculum had statistically significant relationships with Student Retention.

1. The relationship between Academic Approach and Student Retention was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.104; \text{C.R.} = 2.804, p < 0.05$).

2. The relationship between Course Content and Student Retention was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.120; \text{C.R.} = 3.145, p < 0.05$).

3. The relationship between Teaching Method 1 and ‘Student Retention was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.224; \text{C.R.} = 5.621, p < 0.001$).

4. The relationship between Teaching Method 2 and Student Retention was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.224; \text{C.R.} = 8.834, p < 0.001$).

5. For Teaching Method 1, the strongest indicators were the following items:
   - I could easily access information about my program options (0.77)
   - RMIT effectively resolves any student administration issues I might have (0.75)
   - I find the online environment useful to communicate with my teachers outside of class (0.67)
   - I’d know what to do if I had a problem with my student administration (0.66)
   - For the concept Teaching Method 1, the weakest indicator was the item “I find it easy to check my enrolment status and invoices online” (0.58).

6. For Teaching Method 2, the strongest indicators were the following items:
   - Laboratories are well maintained (0.86)
   - Lounge spaces are well maintained (0.84)
• Lecture theatres are well maintained (0.83)
• Classrooms are well maintained (0.82).

7. For Teaching Method 2, the weakest indicator was the item “Toilets are well maintained” (0.66).

8. For Academic Approach, the strongest indicators were the following items:
   • The teaching staff normally give me helpful feedback on how I am going (0.74)
   • My lecturers are extremely good at explaining things (0.74)
   • The teaching staff of this program motivate me to do my best work (0.73)
   • The staff really tried to understand difficulties I might have with the work (0.72).

9. For Academic Approach, the weakest indicator was the item “I was generally given enough time to understand things I have to learn” (0.61).

10. For course content the strongest indicators were the following items:
    • The program develops my problem-solving skills (0.74)
    • The program sharpens my analytic skills (0.74)
    • I usually have a clear idea of where I am going and what is expected of me in this program (0.72)
    • As a result of my program, I feel confident with unfamiliar problems (0.70).

11. For Teaching Method, the weakest indicator was the item “The program improves my skills in written communication” (0.60).

The relationship between the internationalised curriculum and international students’ retention identified in the qualitative data analysis has also been supported by the majority of interviewees. The interview participants believed that the curriculum at RMIT University is
internationalised. The main reasons for their belief in the internationalised nature of the curriculum are that they felt they could apply their knowledge around the globe, the presence of a large number of international students made the University atmosphere internationalised, work experience placements also enable them to get their desired job and the courses are recognised by international accrediting bodies. The students interviewed mentioned the following other reasons:

- Students’ knowledge is applicable globally
- University has an internationalised atmosphere
- International nature of some courses
- The similarity of courses between RMIT University and overseas universities
- Courses are accredited by international organisations
- Secured job opportunities
- Placement can guaranty jobs
- Preparing for international professions
- Course content provides new learning opportunities
- Address global issues in course content
- Course content is based on professional practices with international standard
- Meet the needs of international students
- Course is recognised by international accrediting bodies
- Course leads to an internationally qualification
- Improve critical thinking skills with an international dimension
- Focus on international case studies
- Obtain information from international sources
• Using international publications in teaching
• Encouraging class discussions about global issues
• Encouraging research on international topics
• Guest lecturers with international experience.

Despite the majority of interview participants believing that the curriculum at RMIT is internationalised, a few disagreed and claimed that they could not apply their learning in their home countries or other countries around the world.

5.3.2. Research question two: What is the relationship between the internationalised curriculum and international students’ satisfaction?

In the quantitative data analysis, the relationship between the internationalised curriculum and student satisfaction was significantly and positively correlated. As discussed in the previous sections, internationalising the curriculum is a complex processes that dictates whom, how, and what we teach (Leask, 2001). Based on this understanding, the internationalised curriculum was divided into four sections: Academic Approaches, Teaching Method 1, Teaching Method 2 and Course Content. According to this division, the results of quantitative data analysis of the relationships between the components of Internationalised Curriculum and Student Satisfaction were as follows:

1. The relationship between Academic Approach and Student Satisfaction was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.11; \text{C.R.}= 2.95, p < .05$).
2. The relationship between Course Content and Student Satisfaction was positive and non-significant ($\beta = 0.042; \text{C.R.} = 1.031, p >.05$).
3. The relationship between Teaching Method 1 and Student Satisfaction was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.57; \text{C.R.} = 17.80, p < 0.001$),

4. The relationship between Teaching Method 2 and Student Satisfaction was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.26; \text{C.R.} = 10.86, p < 0.001$).

For the factor Student Satisfaction, the strongest indicators were online services, student union, services and programs for students, and learning support services. Satisfaction on these items shows their importance for international students, and during the interviews, participants pointed to these and indicated how satisfied they are regarding the performance of RMIT University. Within the Student Satisfaction factor, the weakest indicator was the item “Overall satisfaction”.

This relationship identified in the qualitative data analysis has been supported by the majority of interviewees. Interview participants frequently cited their satisfaction with the courses of study, support services, lecturers in general, and in particular, they expressed their satisfaction with the following:

- Reputation (nationally and internationally)
- Fewer requirements
- RMIT University being the first university to accept their application
- High standards
- Placement and practical placements
- Flexibility of RMIT University
- Affordability of RMIT University
- Class group work
- Teaching style
• Ability of the lecturer
• Accessibility of lecturers
• Well experienced lecturers
• Guest lecturers from other companies
• Library’s e-resource collection
• Online course materials
• Internet access
• Career services
• International student advisory services.

Interview participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the accent, knowledge and skills of lecturers, cultural differences, interactions with local people, financial issues, and personal issues. Two out of 13 interviewees were not satisfied with the curriculum at RMIT University and do not accept that it has an internationalised curriculum. In the next section, all of the issues raised by the interviewees are discussed.

5.3.3. Research question three: What is the relationship between the international students’ satisfaction and international students’ retention?

Based on the standard regression weight in structural path model, Student Satisfaction was positively associated with Student Retention ($\beta = 0.37$ C.R. = 8.43, $p < 0.001$). For the factor Student Retention the strongest indicators were the following items:

• At RMIT there are enough activities to develop my skills outside of my program (0.74)
• RMIT generally responds well to student feedback (0.73)
• I have enough opportunities to discuss my academic work with teaching staff (0.72)

• If I have the opportunity to undertake further studies in the future, I would like to study again at RMIT (0.70).

For the factor Student Retention, the weakest indicator was the item, “RMIT is friendly to people from all backgrounds” (0.56).

This relationship has been supported by the qualitative data analysis of the majority of interviewees. Interview participants believe that they have to finish their study to start their real life and to be successful by applying their achievements in their profession. They are looking forward to their futures because they believe they are confident and satisfied with their achievements. The majority of interviewees noted that because of their better future and because of the prospect of finding a good job, they were keen to finish their study.

In the interviews they explained some of the reasons for international students’ retention and why some students drop out of courses. The interviewees also had some recommendations for RMIT administrators to reduce student dropouts. International students pointed to the following reasons regarding their decision to stay on and complete their studies:

• Finding a good job
• University environment
• Work experience opportunities
• The field of study itself is really interesting and motivating
• Friends and classmates
• Lecturers
• Large number of international students
International students gave the following reasons to recommend RMIT to others:

- Well reputed
- Quality of teaching
- Facilities
- Good support
- Focus on workplace experience.

Factors causing students’ to drop out, as suggested by international students, were:

- Problems with English
- No equity between local and international students
- Cost of university life
- Depression
- Homesickness
- Change in interests
- Difficulty of study
- Culture shock.

The most common recommendations made by interviewees to RMIT University to stop international students’ from dropping out were:

- Facilitating greater consideration (understanding and flexibility) by lecturers towards international students
- Controlling the costs of university fees
- Offering greater financial support
- Creating a friendly environment
• Offering free English classes
• Counselling for international students
• Helping students to join groups and get involved in different activities
• Giving international students more responsibilities.

5.3.4. Research question four: Is there an indirect significant relationship between the internationalised curriculum and international students’ retention through students’ satisfaction?

The fourth hypothesis of the study was to determine whether Student Satisfaction mediates the relationship between Internationalised Curriculum’ and Student Retention. According to the bootstrapping result, Teaching Method 1, Teaching Method 2 and Academic Approach had statistically significant indirect effects on retention.

Except for the indirect effect of Course Content on Student Retention (β = 0.015, p > .05), the bootstrapped estimate of the indirect effects of Teaching Method 1 (β = 0.21, p < .05), Teaching Method 2 (β = 0.098, p < .05), and Academic Approach (β = 0.042, p < .05) on retention is significant. The bootstrapped estimate of the mediated effect is statistically significant for the effects of Teaching Method 1, Teaching Method 2 and Academic Approach on Student Retention.

Regarding the impact of the internationalised curriculum on international student retention and satisfaction, the outcome of the interviews shows there is a belief among international students that they have to finish their study whether they are satisfied or not. Their loyalty to the university was evident throughout the interviews, and this finding was supported when international students who were not satisfied with the internationalisation of
the curriculum stated that they would still finish their study at RMIT and still recommend RMIT to others.

5.4. Theme One: Internationalised Curriculum

5.4.1. Introduction

When international students go from their own countries to another country to study, they pursue special goals and their expectations of studying abroad are different from the expectations they would have in their own country. Because most international students in Australia come from developing countries such as China, India and Malaysia, or from countries in the Middle East or Africa, one of their most obvious expectations is that the university at which they have chosen to study should have the potential to fulfil their goals. Undoubtedly, their clearest and most important goals will be to return to their home countries, work in countries outside Australia, or to stay in Australia to live and work. To achieve these goals, the university curriculum should be internationalised.

If international students intend to return to their own countries, it is necessary that whatever they learn or gain from an Australian university be applicable in their home countries. Or, if the students intend to live and work in any other country, it is necessary that the knowledge be applicable in those countries as well. And if they intend to work in Australia, they need to be able to effectively use their international knowledge and skills (Colebatch, 2005).

International students are always hoping that what they have gained during their studies will be applicable in an international context. Statistical reports show that
Australian universities in general and RMIT University in particular, have been selected by international students wishing to pursue their studies. It is well documented that Australia is a popular destination for international students in higher education (T.-M. Chen & Barnett, 2000). In fact, Australia is the third most popular destination for study for international students (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003). There were 504,544 enrolments by full-fee paying international students on student visas in Australia as of October, 2013 (Austraian International Education, 2013), and demand for Australian education is predicted to increase nine-fold over the period 2000 to 2025 (Böhm & IDP Education Australia, 2002).

Australian universities have long been the one of the destinations of choice for international students, and it is expected that international students are considered as one of the most vital and substantial revenue bases for Australian universities. This is particularly relevant to RMIT University because it has a high population of international students (see Figure 5.1) and because international students are therefore an integral part of RMIT University. It is undeniable that Australian universities depend on international students both economically and academically. International students’ tuition fees are often three times more than local students’ tuition fees. As Tuukkanen (2013) states, “international students are more active in mobility” (p. 41) and more motivated (M. Q. Patton, 2002) than local students, and the level of competition was higher among the international students. As a result, Australian universities should attempt to attract more international students. Employing an internationalised curriculum is one essential for attracting international students.
International students who come to Australia from other countries have grown up in other cultures and societies. A new environment is probably attractive for international students for a short time, but international students need an environment and facilities that they do not need too much energy and cost to adapt to. International students have their own special worries; for example, they know that they are far away from family and have to live in an environment with a different culture for some time, which can be difficult for them. International students have to pay high living costs, education expenses and tuition fees in a country like Australia. Therefore, for example, Chinese students should not be worried about finding their favourite food, and Muslim students should not have worries about finding a place to pray. Or as it has been raised by one of interviewees, Chinese
students who study the Bachelor of Teaching in the School of Education at RMIT University must feel assured that what they learn will be applicable at schools in China.

Leong and Chou (1996) and Pedersen (1991) state that international students endure high physical and emotional costs to undertake overseas study to pursue their ambitions and dreams through with the achievement of their own career aspirations as an ultimate goal. As a result, the attribute of an internationalised curriculum might be a significant factor in the selection of a university for study by international students. One of the primary benefits of an internationalised curriculum is that the college or university will make graduates competitive in the global community, capable of meeting world standards, able to work in cross-cultural contexts, and sensitive to the needs of international customers and partners (Ellingboe, 1998; J. Knight, 1994). The quality of teaching is expected to be enhanced when studies of cross-cultural comparisons and international dimensions are included in the curriculum (Ellingboe, 1998). Furthermore, an internationalised curriculum promotes students’ self-development in a changing world by enhancing mutual understanding and cooperation as a basis for the solution of global problems (J. Knight, 1994).

Internationalising the curriculum is a critical issue for both international students and universities. International students need an internationalised curriculum and universities need international students. The review of the literature shows that internationalising the curriculum is the most fundamental element for internationalising the universities. Knight (1997) claims that a number of different elements or strategies are part of the process of integrating an international dimension into the teaching and training, research, and service functions of higher education institutions. Knight (1997) in her
research, which aimed to find out which elements were most important to the internationalisation process, asked different stakeholder groups such as the government, private sector and education sector, to rank the elements most vital to the process of internationalising a university. In general, the top priority was given to the curriculum by most of the research participants.

The results of the quantitative data analysis in this research show that majority of international students are satisfied with the teaching methods and academic approaches. However, they did not feel that the course content was internationalised. But, those interviewed indicated that there were other aspects that caused their dissatisfaction or attrition.

Research on students’ perspectives of internationalisation of the curriculum has revealed a lack of diversity in the curriculum content, and students rate the international dimension in the course work low (Y.-F. Chen, 2006). Conversely, the findings of the Canadian Bureau of International Education (2004) survey showed that the students’ courses and the institutions had generally met or exceeded their expectations. This contradiction adds interest to the interview data alongside the quantitative data in this study.

During the interviews, the researcher found that students expect university administrators and managers to be aware of their opinions and they want to speak up and to be heard. This finding shows that international students need someone to share their problems with. As Bista and Foster (2011) state, international students like to share their problems and make comments related to university experiences. In addition, student retention is positively related to contact with the faculty (J. Bean & Eaton, 2001; Terenzini &
Pascarella, 1991; Tinto, 1975). Effective advice can meet both the students’ needs and the needs of the institution (Railsback & Colby, 1988) because communication between faculty and students promotes student satisfaction with the college, and this can encourage students to fulfil their educational goals. The issues that have been raised by participants should to be considered by university administrators to achieve both the short-term and long-term goals of the university. Because RMIT University has an internationalisation plan in which its main intention is to unequivocally position RMIT University amongst the most reputable institutions in the 2020 global education space, taking the results of this research into account can help RMIT University to achieve its goals.

My working definition of curriculum for this study is:

…the curriculum is everything which students can use and have in their pathway to graduation. It can be from lecturers to content and to all facilities inside or outside of the institution.

Bond (2003) argued that internationalisation cannot be sustained without the curriculum, because the curriculum holds a special rarefied status. That can be the most important reason for university administrators and teaching staff to take a comprehensive look at the issue.

The literature shows that internationalisation of the curriculum is one of the most important means for the internationalisation of higher education. In addition, internationalisation of the curriculum is unanimously recognised by educators and researchers as the most important of the internationalisation strategies that can have an impact on all students. Van der Wende (1997) believes that curriculum is the most stable element in the process of internationalisation and concluded that the curriculum is a comprehensive factor
that encompasses everything that students are involved with in the course of their studies. However, several researchers and institutional leaders contend that internationalising the curriculum is probably the most difficult and complex strategy for internationalising higher education (e.g. Bond, Qian, & Huang, 2003; Bond & Thayer Scott, 1999; Burn & Opper, 1982; Cogan, 1998; Ellingboe, 1998; M. F. Green, 2002; J. A. Mestenhauser, 1998, 2002). If this comprehensive factor is to be considered by universities, it might have two important advantages. The first is achieving universities’ long-term goals and contributing to student satisfaction with the curriculum. With increased student satisfaction, the rate of student retention will increase, which benefits the university. Even after graduation, if the student is interested in pursuing higher degrees, RMIT University would be the University of Choice.

In this study, Internationalised Curriculum is divided into Academic Approach, Course Content, Teaching Method 1 and Teaching Method 2. The results of the quantitative data analysis show that there is a direct relationship between all four factors and Student Retention. In other words, there is a direct relationship between the internationalised curriculum and international student’s retention. There is a relationship between all components of Internationalised Curriculum (except for Course Content) and Student Satisfaction. This means that international students are not satisfied with the course content at RMIT University. However, despite this dissatisfaction they will continue their study until graduation, and they will recommend RMIT University to others.

To explore whether the curriculum at RMIT University is internationalised, the participants were interviewed using four main questions.
5.4.2. Curricula with international subjects

The first question was, “Has RMIT University offered you an internationalised curriculum dealing with international subjects?” Because Chan (2011) found that internationalisation of the curriculum does vary across courses, the interviewees’ answers to the first question have been categorised to three groups. The first group of answers indicate that the curriculum at RMIT University is totally internationalised or internationalisation is inherent in the curriculum. The second of answers are that the curriculum is semi-internationalised, and the third group of answers are that the curriculum is not internationalised and some called the curriculum at RMIT University a localised curriculum. International students who have left their home countries for the purpose of study at RMIT University have different expectations from the students who are studying in their home countries’ universities. They require knowledge and achievements that can be applicable in their home countries or worldwide, and it seems that international students are more sensitive to the curriculum provided by the university than local students are.

Breuning and Ishiyama (2007) conducted a study to investigate the benefits of using international subjects. Their findings reveal that the benefits that international programs can provide are substantive knowledge about a specific region of the world or global issues, desirable skills for careers, acquisition of a foreign language, study abroad experience, intercultural competency, thinking, analysis and problem solving skills, writing and speaking skills, and quantitative skills (Breuning & Ishiyama, 2007). The students who believe that the curriculum at RMIT University is internationalised expressed their satisfaction in the way that they can apply what they learn at RMIT University in other countries or in their own country.
Some students pointed out that, because RMIT University has a large number of international students, the university environment is internationalised and has a great influence on the internationalisation of the curriculum. Their reasoning is that when there are students with different cultures at a university, the university tends to provide services that are relevant to their cultures and traditions. For example, RMIT University holds cultural ceremonies and events to feature the traditions of different countries or offer courses in foreign languages.

Although most of the participants of this study responded positively to the presence of internationalised curriculum at RMIT University, some responded negatively, saying that they are worried because they believe the curriculum is not internationalised and that it is localised to specifically Victorian state standards. They said that what they have learned is not applicable in their own country. Their concern is intensified because although they know their learning is not applicable in their country, they cannot quit their studies because of their parents’ pressure. These participants stated that it is considered unusual in their culture for someone to quit their studies early. Green and Olson (2003) argue that students and their parents are increasingly expecting an internationalised curriculum to provide international education opportunities.

Jang (2009) state that the problem associated with the internationalised curriculum is that the current institutional efforts to internationalise the curriculum are fragmented and shallow. Coxhead et al. (2010) claimed that the challenge is to adapt curriculum design, delivery mode, teaching, and assessment strategies to meet the needs of a diverse student audience. Brustein (2007) states that most of the institutions address the need for global competence by adding a diversity or international course requirement, or by offering degrees, minors or certificates in area or international studies. He laments that students too often
complete these programs without any competency in a foreign language or any knowledge of, or any specific grounding in, the culture of a society outside of the host country. Hayward (2000) believes that while most universities have recognised the need to produce globally competent students, few are defining what skills, knowledge and attitudes students need. As a result, the design of the curriculum for international students needs careful consideration (Coxhead et al., 2010). It is noteworthy that RMIT University has an internationalisation plan that has eight priorities, and one of the most prominent priorities is developing global education via a quality assured globalised curriculum. The strategies to achieve this priority include developing curriculum that is international. Therefore, the issues raised by international students who believe the curriculum at RMIT University is not internationalised should be the centre of attention of University administrators; the outcome of this research can be beneficial to the university plan.

Because some students expressed their dissatisfaction in relation to the curriculum at RMIT, a possible cause may be their problems with English. In the analysis of the quantitative data, of the indicators of the Academic Approach factor, the lowest rating was for the item “I was generally given enough time to understand things I have to learn”. For the Course Content factor, the lowest rating was for the item “the program improves skills in written communication”. The student who was not satisfied with curriculum at RMIT said that because of her English, she could not pass her course placement. She said that because her supervisor did not consider her situation, she does not believe that curriculum at RMIT is internationalised. Both the quantitative and the qualitative results show that dissatisfaction with the curriculum can be the cause of international students’ weakness in English. Interestingly, students who believe RMIT University’s curriculum is not internationalised state
that, they will continue their study to graduation and, more interestingly, that they intend to recommend RMIT to others as well. Students seem to understand curriculum to mean course content: the material for their study such as books and notes. They express their struggles with the English language as dissatisfaction with the curriculum, but they continue their studies and are satisfied with the methods and approaches to teaching.

5.4.3. Preparing students for international professions

The second interview question was whether or not RMIT University provides a curriculum that prepares students for defined international professions. The interviewees’ answers were varied. The majority had positive viewpoints about their future and believed that studying at RMIT University would prepare them for international professions. However, two out of the 13 interviewees stated that the curriculum at RMIT would not prepare them for international careers.

International students expect that their achievements will prepare them for international professions; therefore, what they acquire during their study at RMIT University is important to them. Both the quantitative and the qualitative results imply that majority of international students believe that the curriculum at RMIT University will prepare them for international professions. An example to support this, on the Course Content factor, the highest rating belongs to the items that are prerequisites for working in the international arena, including the ideas that the program will develop problem solving skills, the program sharpens analytic skills, students have a clear idea where they are going and the program helps them develop the ability to work as a team member. Likewise, in the qualitative interviews, international students explained that the courses prepared them for international professions because their courses are accredited by
international organisations, their courses secured job opportunities and placements (with mostly international companies), and they can guarantee jobs. They believe that they can work anywhere around the world. Curriculum that can prepare students for international professions can be more important because the requirement for employees with international knowledge and skills (international competency) around the world increases.

Corporate and global demand for globally-aware graduate is discussed in detail in the literature review. The majority of international students studying in Australia come from developing countries, and their education is a great benefit to the developing nations because their students have acquired world class skills from a first world nation. In aiming to prepare students to be effective global workers and informed citizens, many colleges and universities are taking deliberate actions to develop the foundations of global competencies in their students. These actions include revising general education curricula, emphasising study abroad and internship abroad opportunities, expanding foreign language study, and creating international certificates and tracks within majors (M. F. Green & Shoenberg, 2006). Although the curriculum at RMIT University is already considered to be an internationalised curriculum, RMIT University has created a strategic plan to further enhance its presence in the international arena by developing curriculum that is relevant, incorporates cross-cultural learning, and aims to expand opportunities for work-integrated learning in international and cross-cultural settings.

5.4.4. Accreditation of courses

In the interviews, the international students stated that one of the reasons they are able to work at an international level after graduation is that their courses are accredited by
international professional organisations. As Green and Shoenberg (2006) suggest, providing an internationally recognised degree is one way to prepare students for international work.

According to Espiritu (2007), accreditation of courses has been positively related to higher retention rates at institutions. Researchers argue that accreditation helps to protect the consumer (i.e., the student), by ensuring a minimum level of quality in an increasingly diverse and confusing marketplace, particularly on the international stage (A. Anderson, 2002; Romero, 2008; Thomas & Trapnell, 2007). Selden and Porter (1977) identified four common uses of accreditation: internal, external, professional and social. For example, a student from Kuwait stated that she came to Australia to pursue her studies because she realised that RMIT University is internationally recognised and well-known in her field of study. When she was searching for a good university, she thought the degree she would receive from RMIT University would be an internationally valid and recognised degree. This student had been advised to come to RMIT by her teacher who had previous experience with the quality of education at RMIT. In discussing the decision to select a university on quality grounds, the University of Melbourne in its report of the Higher Education Base Funding Review (Lomax-Smith, Watson, & Webster, 2011) states that international students need qualifications recognised in their home country or other places where they may seek employment. The University of Melbourne also states that Australian universities must meet international standards. In some cases, these standards come from programs created with international partners. More commonly, international standards are indirectly imposed through Australian professional bodies benchmarking themselves against their equivalents in other countries, or the standards are directly set when Australian universities are accredited by academic or professional associations overseas.
An important advantage of international accreditation is that RMIT University will conform to international standards. As a result, the university, the fields of study and the curriculum in general will be internationalised. Because accreditation should be done annually, the RMIT University needs to always keep its required standards, which are considered as an advantage.

5.4.5. Work placement

Another important factor for the international students is the work placement provided by RMIT University. Most interviewed students emphasised that one of the main reasons for choosing RMIT University was the university’s assistance with work placements by introducing them to related organisations and companies and because RMIT has a good relationship with many international organisations and companies. A work placement recommended by the university has two advantages. First, the university introduces students to recognised organisations and companies that follow international standards, and second, the service is convenient because international students do not have any information about finding a suitable place for an internship in Australia. International students believe that undertaking an internship in companies introduced by the university brings about an advantage, particularly because the organisation may offer them a job after graduation if they successfully finish an internship or training course. This will guarantee their employment after graduation, and because most of the organisations are locally and internationally known, training can increase the students’ job prospects. One of the most frequent words cited as an important issue for international students was “placement”.

As discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2, and based on the results of the both quantitative and the qualitative analysis, the majority of international students believe that the
curriculum at RMIT University will prepare them for work in international contexts. This question (i.e., whether curriculum will prepare students for international professions) and its answers supports the working definition of curriculum in this research. Students working in international contexts do not just need academic knowledge; they also need to acquire skills and information about cultures, disciplines and other nationalities.

5.4.6. Providing appropriate course content for international students

The third question under the theme of internationalisation of the curriculum was whether or not RMIT University provides appropriate course content for international students. Based on the quantitative data analyses, the relationship between the Course Content and Student Retention factors has been supported, while the relationship between Course Content and Student Satisfaction was not supported. The interview participants believed that the course content provided by RMIT University was useful and would help them achieve their goals. The students argued that the course content provided new learning opportunities, addressed global issues, was based on professional practices with international standards, met the needs of international students, was recognised by international accrediting bodies, led to an internationally qualification and improved critical thinking skills with an international dimension.

In the researcher’s view, according to the outcome of the qualitative and the quantitative analyses, although the results of the quantitative analysis implies that international students are dissatisfied with the course content, it may be because the content is not attractive to them because English is not their first language. The students stated several times during the interviews that reading and understanding is difficult for them. They often have to read a paragraph at least three times to understand it, or they
have to spend three times that of local students on their studies. However, they do believe that the course content at RMIT University will help them to achieve their goals. This conclusion is based on the indicators of the Course Content factor, for which the lowest rate of positive response was for the item, “The program improves my skills in written communication”. Among all indicators of the four factors, this was the lowest rated item. The attributes that interviewees pointed out were more relevant to the quality of course content provided by RMIT University, and not about their satisfaction with this content.

The attitude of international students to attributes of course content is supported by Francis’ (1993) findings that the following factors that can be taken into account to enhance curriculum as a mechanism of internationalisation:

- High visibility of international and global issues in course content
- Material that includes examples from as many countries and cultures as possible
- Various cultural approaches to the subject being taught
- Material that encourages an awareness of global diversity
- Material that taps into the experience of international students and local students of different cultural heritage procedures to ensure that all students have maximum exposure to an internationalised curriculum.

Internationalisation of the curriculum is the most important strategy to ensure that all students acquire the knowledge and skills needed in a globalised world (M. F. Green & Shoenberg, 2006). According to the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (2007), “the internationalisation of curriculum is the process of including international content for teaching. This curriculum development is aimed at integrating international content into the formal and operational aspects of the curriculum. Formal aspects refer to course content
and materials. Operational aspects refer to teaching and learning methods, grouping of students, and the place and time of courses”(p. 4).

In general, an internationalised curriculum is of crucial importance to international students. Their motivations for studying abroad include returning to their own countries and working there, residence and employment in Australia, or residence and employment in other countries. What they learn and achieve must be applicable in an international context. During the interviews, the international students emphasised the importance of internationalisation of the university courses. When they were asked about their rationale for this importance, they stated that it is important to have international achievements to find a job. For instance, a student from United Arab Emirates stated that “Emirates airline has offered me a job because they know that what I have learned at university can be applied internationally. They are also aware of the quality of education in Australia especially at RMIT University, so that they proposed that I join them for work after graduation”.

In summary, although the course content at RMIT University is not the international students’ favourite, it can still be a means for achievement of their goals. The results show that this dissatisfaction arises from their weakness in English. It would be beneficial for international students if RMIT University had a strategy to enhance international students’ English competency before and during their studies. A positive relationship between student satisfaction and student retention has been identified in a number of studies conducted in the higher education context, as well as in this study (Athiyaman, 1997; Longden, 2002; Seidman, 2005; Sigala, Christou, Petruzzellis, D’Uggento, & Romanazzi, 2006; Taylor, 2005). It would be beneficial for RMIT University to make its course content more attractive to international students by increasing their English proficiency.
5.4.7. Teaching methods at an international level

The final issue regarding the internationalised curriculum at RMIT University was the teaching methods. Interviewees were asked whether or not RMIT University adopted teaching methods at an international level. Learning can be complicated for a student who studies in a country with a different culture and language because the environment is totally different from the environment the student is used to. This difference can include the content of courses, the university campus, teaching methods, and the ways of communicating with lecturers and local students. There can also be differences in the university facilities. For instance, toilets in the Middle East are different from those in Western countries, and the use of toilets in Western countries has always been a concern for international students who come from the Middle East. Another example is the way of communicating and relating with lecturers, which is an important issue for international students, especially those from South East Asia. Some Asian students felt that their relationships with lecturers had some limitations because they were not familiar with the kind of relationship that exists between students and their lecturers in Australia. Interestingly, a student stated that she failed one of her courses in her first semester because she did not know that she could consult with her lecturer about academic problems. At the end of the semester, she realised that the relationship between students and lecturers in Australia is more informal than in her home country.

Abel (2002) found that some international students expect more formal relationships with their lecturers. Edwards and Tonkin (1990) stated that most international students tend to be more reticent than local students and are accustomed to listening and learning rather than speaking in class. In addition, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) found that students’ informal and formal contact with faculty members (lecturers and instructors) consistently relate to
student persistence decisions (i.e., retention). In this research, teaching methods include all factors that are involved in students’ learning – from lecturers’ teaching style to facilities for studying. The conditions, teaching method, teaching aids and facilities are of great importance to international students. These factors can encourage students to pursue their studies. When students have a good relationship with lecturers, and the university provides services such as online resources, libraries, tutors and computers, then students have no excuse for attrition from their study.

Both the quantitative and the qualitative results imply that international students’ satisfaction is related to the teaching method. Based on the quantitative results, there is a direct relationship between teaching method and student retention, and there is also a relationship between teaching method and international student satisfaction, which can be the cause of student retention. When interview participants were asked about the teaching methods at RMIT University, they stated that they believe the teaching methods at the university are internationalised. They referred to points including focusing on international case studies, obtaining information from international sources, using international publications in teaching, encouraging class discussions about global issues, encouraging research on international topics and guest lecturers with international experience.

While international students expressed their satisfaction with the teaching methods, they believe that the teaching methods at RMIT University are the means that will lead them to achieving their goals. Regarding the teaching methods, the most important matter for international students are the role and teaching style of the lecturer as well as the university’s facilities. The majority of students mentioned the international resources that their lecturers encouraged them to use in their studies. From the quantitative data analysis, the highest rate of
positive responses were for the items “online services” and “learning support”, which included their access of international resources recommended by lecturers.

The literature review shows that researchers have studied different educational methods for increasing the student retention rate. In most of the research, the positive significant relationship between teaching method and student retention has been confirmed. For instance, Mantz Yorke (2003) proposes that to increase first-year retention, the assessment at the end of the first semester should be primarily formative. Widmar (1994) states that supplemental instruction has been used for years to improve students’ performance and retention in courses with high attrition rates. Supplemental instruction was successful in improving course grades and student retention, and it was subsequently extended throughout the curriculum at the University of Missouri–Kansas City (UM-KC) (Burmeister, Kenney, & Nice, 1996), and as some authors found, participative methods increase retention of students (Biggs, 2005; Kvam, 2000).

Teaching should include engagement with the international specialist dimension of the discipline so that students are capable of performing their profession for international clients (Chan, 2011). Crosling, Edwards, and Schroder (2008) believe that curriculum internationalisation can occur by the following:

1. Incorporating the teaching of international examples of theory applications and foreign perspectives, removing colloquial terms and examples

2. Developing students’ problem-solving ability through engagement with cases set in a global environment

3. Transforming students to become sensitive to culture-bound interpretations of the subject’s concepts and principles.
When the international students were asked whether RMIT University provides teaching methods that were at an international level, most believed that this was true, and their reasons, as stated below, were in accordance with the findings by Crosling, Edwards, and Schroder (2008):

- RMIT focuses on international case studies
- They are encouraged to obtain information from international sources
- They use international publication in teaching
- They encourage class discussion about international topics
- They employ guest lecturers with international experience.

These outcomes are supported by Oxford Brooks University (2002). Oxford Brooks University published guidance for adding international dimensions to curricula, suggesting the following means of doing so (as cited in Black, 2004, p. 7) (Oxford Brooks University, 2002 p.11):

- Referring to international research
- Applying theory in an international context
- Using international material in case studies and other assignments
- Using small group discussions of international aspects
- Requiring the demonstration of international knowledge in assessments
- Encouraging foreign language study
- Promoting cultural sensitivity and diversity
- Recruiting international students and drawing on their experience in class
- Offering international exchange
- Study abroad opportunities
• Offering international internships.

The importance of case studies is clear. Most interviewees in this study emphasised that case studies have increased their knowledge in international contexts and have enabled them to think critically and solve problems. Railmond and Halliburton (1995) conclude that a program of study is not internationalised unless international case studies and examples are used in teaching. A case study is a way to add insight about international interactions (Baldwin, 2014).

Deem (2001) defined internationalisation as “the sharing of ideas, knowledge and ways of doing things in similar ways across different countries” (p. 7). This definition presupposes having someone with whom to share those ideas, knowledge and ways of doing things. For Deem, it appears to be a prerequisite for a higher education institution to establish relationships with institutions in different countries in be able to begin the internationalisation process. One of the reasons that the interviewees in this study were satisfied with the teaching methods at RMIT University might be because the university invites lecturers from international universities to teach at RMIT, which in turn leads to the transference of lecturers’ different experiences to the students. Therefore, the students’ insight, understanding, and knowledge about international issues increase.

Leask (2004) lists a number of activities as part of internationalisation. These activities include having international guest lecturers, using international resources such as newspapers and online media for different perspectives, creating discussion groups, and coordinating collaborative projects with international partners. All of these activities were reported by interviewees in this research as appropriate teaching methods for an international standard of teaching. Baldwin (2014) believes that internationalising a course might involve challenging
students to reflect on cultural values, helping students explore other cultural values, including information about different cultures through readings, inviting guest speakers from different countries, or coordinating projects with international partners.

Ellingboe (1999) emphasises that having just a few international students in a college class does not by itself make that class internationalised. He claims that it is a combination of factors including small group projects, an international unit, class assignments on cross-cultural topics, formal presentations and informal sharing by international students, international readings on the syllabus, and the instructor's knowledge about international issues, countries and regions of the world, that contribute more to curricular internationalisation. These factors support the findings related to the question about teaching methods at the international level at RMIT University.

Some students believed that the curriculum of RMIT University was not internationalised. They claimed that RMIT University is still far from internationalising the curriculum because what is taught and what they achieve at RMIT are not applicable in their own home country. One student asserted that she was shy, taciturn and reticent, and relationships between individuals in her country are not like those in Australia. Because she could not speak English very well to communicate during her placement, she was not able to show her abilities. Her supervisor did not pay attention to any of these issues and prepared a report for the university that caused her to fail that course. She stated that if the curriculum had been internationalised, the supervisor would never have had such a negative attitude towards her because one of the key underpinnings of an international curriculum is the teaching methods and student–lecturer relationships.
It can be concluded that most of the interviewees believed that the curriculum at RMIT University has been internationalised and most of the interviewees’ responses to the questions related to the elements of the internationalised curriculum confirm other researchers’ findings. The responses of the students who did not believe that the curriculum at RMIT University is internationalised emphasised their problems with English. This is a common problem amongst international students, which should be addressed by RMIT University. By taking this into account, RMIT University can have an influential role in promoting the curriculum, students’ satisfaction, and eventually the students’ retention at the university.

Despite the relationship between course content and student satisfaction, both the qualitative and the qualitative results show that a majority of students believe that the curriculum at RMIT University can lead them to their goals, that they will continue their study to graduation, and if they have the opportunity for further study, they will consider RMIT University as the first priority. There is rapid and ongoing change in the international education sector, particularly with regards to international students’ demands. The general environment of academia is also rapidly changing. For example, online study is becoming more popular as students from varied walks of life choose to undertake further study. Frequent refinement of the curriculum “as everything from beginning to graduation” is necessary to keep international students satisfied and increase their retention rate.

5.5. Theme Two: International Student Satisfaction

Student satisfaction is one of the issues that has been much discussed in recent decades, and has been the subject of several articles and research studies. The issue of student satisfaction has been mostly considered from a marketing point of view and there
are still significant issues that need to be investigated. Noel-Levitz’s (2009) notes that 33.9% of four-year public institutions had programs specifically designed for the retention of international students, but only 6.8% of the respondents felt that the programs were very effective.

It may be easier to understand the issues when qualitative studies are combined with quantitative studies. The findings from questionnaires and surveys imply that most international students are satisfied, but the participants in this study stated that there were other factors that should be considered by RMIT University. For example, when a Malaysian student was asked about his decision to stay on at university, he stated that he is going to finish his undergraduate study but he is not going to choose RMIT University for his further study because the facilities provided to master’s or PhD students by RMIT University are not as good as those available at Malaysian Universities. This statement can be interpreted as saying that the facilities at RMIT University should be better.

If students’ satisfaction is considered only from a marketing perspective, students feel as if they are seen from the business viewpoint as a commodity. Nowadays, whether intentionally or unintentionally, managers look at all matters, economic, political, educational and families, as commercial considerations. The impact of this point of view is evident in social, cultural, and political affairs, and can result in dissatisfaction in day-to-day life. This dissatisfaction is not because of a lack of quality in the goods and services, but it seems that there is a gap between services or service providers and clients’ satisfaction, which should be considered sociologically and psychologically. This conclusion is supported by the quantitative data analysis findings. By reviewing the indicators of the Student Satisfaction factor, all indicators have been highly rated.
(between 0.72 and 0.80), which means that international students are highly satisfied with the services at RMIT University. However, the overall satisfaction of international students at RMIT University has the lowest rating at 0.61, which means there is a big gap between this indicator (overall satisfaction) and other indicators of satisfaction. This can be interpreted as students being satisfied with services but there is something missing.

Despite having more facilities available, student satisfaction has become more sensitive and complex. International students are not exempt from this. They are satisfied with the services provided by RMIT, but their overall satisfaction is very low. When asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their degree of satisfaction, they are satisfied with the individual elements. But when they were interviewed, some concerning statements were made. In fact, it seems that student satisfaction is achieved when they are supported morally and socially and not just commercially. For example, students said that having paid high educational expenses and fees, parking and printing cost should be free for international students.

For example, a student from Singapore found out through her friends that I was conducting research on the curriculum and on international students’ satisfaction. She contacted me voluntarily and asked to be interviewed. Although she expressed her satisfaction with the university, the lecturers and her course, she mentioned other problems in the interview. She said that she had to pay her tuition fees at university herself and that she did not have any scholarship. As a result, affording education and living expenses was very difficult. She complained about paying the university for printing and copying her assignments, as well as for having to pay the full price for commuting on public transportation, despite being a student. I felt that this student was somehow confused because she expressed her satisfaction but she wanted to be heard by
the university administrators and to show her dissatisfaction of these other areas. This supports my confidence regarding the importance of this information from students for administrators and managers. Managers should not be satisfied because student retention is high for the purpose of profit, but they should see student satisfaction as a student right. International students should not be just viewed as a financial source for the university. To assess students’ satisfaction with their education at RMIT University, the students were asked questions and their responses are discussed below:

5.5.1. Students’ pre-university experience

When students were asked about which feature made them choose RMIT University for their education, the answers were varied. Almost all agreed that RMIT University is well-known with a good reputation. Some students chose RMIT University because their friends suggested the university to them. Another reason for choosing RMIT University was financial. International students found that study at RMIT was cheaper than other Australian universities of the same calibre. In addition, RMIT University is good for training courses because the university finds appropriate places for students’ internships and placements. This can be an important issue for international students who are not familiar with the environment in Australia and do not have enough information about places that might accept them for placement. Another reason that made RMIT University attractive to them was that their friends who had studied or were studying at RMIT University told them that the university and its environment was consistent with their aspirations. Some students chose RMIT University because they had no other options.
The students who chose RMIT could be divided into two groups: the first group who were satisfied that RMIT University had what they were looking for and the second group who had no choice but to choose RMIT. The stages which impact these decision-making groups have been discussed in the literature review; ultimately it is the university which decides which students will attend, and therefore all student decisions revolve around this acceptance.

When the students were interviewed for this study, financial issues were one of their key concerns. They unanimously emphasised that one of the most important parameters for choosing the university was the tuition fee. As Maringe (2006) states, a price element has the greatest impact on university choice and the issue of value for money may begin to become a big part of an applicants’ decision making.

Because one of the main sources of income for universities is tuition fees, the issue is important for both students and the university. The universities want to charge more and the students would like to pay less. Because students accept and commit to paying tuition fees by enrolling, it should not be assumed that they do not have and will not have financial problems. Most international students in Australia come from developing countries, and changes to the economies of developing countries can affect the students. For example, the political problems in the Middle East and Western countries’ sanctions against Iran caused changes to Iran’s currency rates five times in just six months. This was a great and unexpected shock for Iranian students studying at RMIT University and at all Australian Universities as well (Australian Government, 2013). Because one of the criteria for selection of the university is its reputation, RMIT University should consider that international students may sometimes need financial support, and if the university
helps them, it would positively affect RMIT’s reputation. Financial assistance is also vital for degree completion (St John, Paulsen, & Carter, 2005).

It is important to consider appropriate methods that RMIT could use to attract students looking to pursue their studies. Marketing tactics are essential, as discussed in the literature review. These tactics can take many forms.

One of the students’ reasons for selecting RMIT University was that it is the only university that offers their desired courses. RMIT University can reinforce its position by offering unique courses. Efficient use of existing lecturers and updating the courses and fields of study can boost the capacity and thus the position of the RMIT University. International students frequently compared their university with other universities in their remarks.

As discussed in the literature review, universities should play to their strengths and develop its characteristics as an institution. However, more importantly, RMIT can identify courses that are exclusive to their university and upgrade these courses to make global demands and maintain their recognition and unique qualities and continue to employ top lecturers and promote the quality of education and facilities (curriculum). By becoming well known for some specific courses, the university can promote its overall reputation and become noticed by international students. A university’s reputation improves student retention and academic success (Barefoot, 1993).

In summary, there is a direct relationship between student satisfaction and student expectations (Alves & Raposo, 2007), and performance is one of the most influential factors in determining satisfaction (Haistead, Hartman, & Schmidt, 1994; Rautopuro & Vaisanen, 2000). When students search for and select a university, their search depends on
a university’s past performance. RMIT University can satisfy its current students through periodical assessment of its performance, finding its weak and strong points, removing its weaknesses, and promoting its strengths. The current students at RMIT University are important sources of information for future students and can play the role of positive propagandists for the university. By removing weaknesses and defects, and by promoting strengths, RMIT can increase its national and international reputation, satisfy current students and attract more prospective students.

5.5.2. Students’ positive experience of studying at RMIT

In the second question, the interviewed students were asked if they enjoyed a specific course more than others. The students stated that they should study courses whether or not they are enjoyable because it is the path they have taken. They believed that if they like and enjoy a course and are satisfied, it is because of the teaching methods, not the course itself. Wagner, Werner, and Schramm (2002) state that numerous factors influence student satisfaction, including the quality and types of interaction between students and lecturers as well as the presentation style.

Voss, Gruber, and Szmigin (2007) conclude that the ability of lecturers to choose the most suitable teaching method from a variety of teaching tools is important to students. When lecturers can offer interesting lessons, students become observant and pay attention to what their lecturers are saying. For example, some students stated that it is very enjoyable and educational when they were asked to complete team or group work in the class, or the when the lecturer asked the students to discuss issues in different groups. These group activities are enjoyable because students learn a lot from each other. Practical work is very important for these students because they feel their weaknesses in
English language less and the lessons change from being purely theoretical to exciting applied practices, which increases learning.

Group or team work has a lot of advantages. In a multi-cultural class environment where the students are not familiar with each other and are culturally very different, working in groups gives them a chance to become familiar with each other. When completing group work, students have to cooperate, study, communicate and establish relationships in and out of class. One of the greatest advantages of this kind of communication is that students learn about different cultures. Other advantages are that students practice group or team work so that they can use their experiences in real life, students can practice and realise the importance of taking on responsibilities, and students can understand their strengths and weaknesses by comparing themselves with other students.

The findings of this study are consistent with Petress (2004) who found that group study validates what students really know because group activities lessen the stress related to examinations by reducing self-doubt about what they know. According to Vivacqua, Mattos, Tornaghi, de Souza, and Cukierman, (2003), group study allows individuals to interact with other students and observe how they handle and solve problems. Interaction with classmates permits the students to reach higher degrees of intellectual development because student–student discussions lead to deeper learning than instructor-centred discussions (Schrire, 2006). In a similar vein, Tinto (1997) found that stronger integration of students in learning communities (student–student discussion or group study) can increase the level of student retention.
Practical placement is very important for international students and this was emphasised in the interviews. International students believe that the outcomes of professional placement are more than just academic study because they can practice the theories in a real context. According to David and Hein (2012), the importance of practical placements are recognised at an international level and there are no contradictions regarding the important role that placement may have in professional training. Sfard (1998) speaks about learning, which is viewed from two perspectives: “acquisition metaphor” centred on knowledge acquisition and “participation metaphor” where learning takes place by participating in practices. Hager (2004) argues that learning is not a process located only in the learner’s mind, but depends on the learner’s environment. Learning is contextual, meaning that the opportunity to learn must broaden. This view of learning is that of enhancing the value of practical placement in study, of special importance being the need for students to participate in the work in the real world. Learning in the workplace has characteristics that complement what courses in universities can offer. For example, learning during practical placement is mostly collaborative. It produces implicit and tacit knowledge and situation-specific competencies. The learner is seen as a worker and a diversity of experiences is encouraged.

Based on interviewees’ answers, the most prominent reason for the enjoyment of courses was the lecturer. Nearly all of the interviewees brought up the importance of lecturers and the significance of their teaching style and their communication with international students. The interviewed students identified the following issues upon which their satisfaction depends: teaching method, lecturer’s abilities and experience,
lecturer’s accessibility, and the participation of guest lecturers. Relationships with lecturers and communicating with lecturers is a very important issue for international students. One of the features of a good lecturer is his or her accessibility and responsibility. The students stated that they enjoy their lessons and are satisfied that when they have a question, they feel that they can ask their lecturers by sending an e-mail and receive an answer quickly so that the rest of their studying is not affected. They claimed that it is worthwhile for them when lecturers immediately respond to their questions, even during holidays or on weekends. It is interesting that in the quantitative analysis, of the eight indicators of satisfaction, online service was rated highest, which means that international students are satisfied with online services in which communication with their lecturers is included. It is also important for international students to have access resources immediately, which is why students expressed their satisfaction with online services at RMIT University.

It is obvious that lecturers play an important role in increasing students’ efficiency and proficiency. A lecturer can meet students’ technical and even emotional needs through encouragement and better communication, as students have both cognitive and affective needs (Levitz et al., 1999). A lecturer also has an essential role in students’ satisfaction and retention the given possibilities for communication and relationships with the students during their education. This finding is in accordance with the results of Gregory’s (2010) study, in which understanding student–faculty (lecturer as a faculty member) interactions may provide additional insight into the retention puzzle.

Because the role of lecturers in students’ satisfaction and retention is very important, selecting lecturers has a significant impact on the quality of university study.
As Myers, Martin, Mottet, Richmond, and McCroskey (2006) note, “Lecturers who are viewed as being credible exert a tremendous amount of influence on their students” (p. 68). In addition, Pozo-Munoz, Rebollos-Pacheco, and Fernandez-Ramirez, (2000) claim that competency is by far the most important characteristic of ideal lecturers. They should have knowledge of their subject and be able to communicate their expertise clearly to students. According to Greimel-Fuhrmann and Geyer (2003), good lecturers should give explanations, answer questions, adapt their teaching methods, and be interested in and show concern for their students and their learning progress. Good lecturers should also be humorous, friendly, patient and fair graders. Therefore, the researcher believes that the lecturer’s role in students’ success and retention is very important.

Maurice and Jesson (2010) state that institutional initiatives drive attempts to identify and enforce teaching practices that are assumed to lead to heightened student retention and success. In addition, students who perceive their lecturer as a competent, trustworthy and caring individual report greater cognitive and affective learning (Finn et al., 2009), and because perceived credibility exerts such a positive influence on learning, there is reason to believe that credibility may also have an impact on the classroom outcome and student retention (Wheeless, Witt, Maresh, Bryand, & Schrod, 2011).

The final point related to positive experience relates to the support services provided by RMIT University for international students. Most of the students showed their satisfaction with services such as the library, e-resources, online course materials, internet access, career services and international student advisory services. The importance of students’ satisfaction with support services is as important as satisfaction with other issues such as lecturers. Support services can facilitate pursuing a successful
education path for students. These services are vital for students because they can reach their goals by using these services. Hammer, Grigsby, and Woods (1998) conclude that, “students who perceived the university as providing effective support services reported the lowest levels of work-school conflict” (p. 225). In the quantitative analysis, the learning support service provided by RMIT University is one of the strongest indicators for satisfaction. This high level of satisfaction for learning support service implies the importance of support services as well as the high level of satisfaction of international students.

The analysis of the interviews shows that although students’ financial problems were raised in interviews, when they were asked about support services, most referred to services that were related to their academic and educational issues. The findings inform the interviews agree with the results of quantitative data analysis, which in terms of the satisfaction, academic indicators such as learning support, library and computing facilities and programs for students have been rated highly. This indicates the level of international students’ satisfaction and also the importance of learning support to them. International students expect to receive services beyond what is offered in classes because they pay high tuition fees. Thus, one of the points that can distinguish RMIT from other universities is the provision of high-quality support services to international students. Because international students do not enjoy special free facilities outside the university, using support services offered by the university can be a great support and increases the university’s reputation for international students.

As Potter (2013) states, there is evidence to suggest that student support services can play a significant role in helping student retention. One of the most important services
for international students is the international student advisory service. The advisors at the university display an understanding of what is important to students as well as potential areas for improvement for the advisors and the university support service departments. Kramer (2003) defines advising as a successful process that leads to students’ successful retention, results in increased participation in the institution, promotes relationships with faculty members, increases satisfaction with the college, improves academic achievement and links academics with future careers.

Using support services becomes important for international students when they consider these services as instruments for reaching their goals. Students can use these services for communicating and forming relationships with each other. Communicating with other students can solve many problems for international students. For example, one of the important issues that the students noted is that the university website was the facility that allows them to communicate with other students and share their problems and needs. In the quantitative data analysis, of the indicators of student satisfaction, students had the greatest satisfaction with online services. As an example, finding a place to live can be done by using the university website; the rental properties offered on the website are affordable and close to RMIT University and it is very likely that their roommate will also be a student. The other point that students expressed their satisfaction with was the library, but they did express the desire for it to be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In the interviews, international students stated that in addition to studying in the library, they are encouraged to study by looking at other students who are studying so that their spirit and motivation rises. The library can even be a good place for finding friends and librarians are helpful to the students.
According to Linnartz (2005), some of the reasons students cited for dropping out of university included a lack of support, which they defined as feelings of isolation, lack of library and bookstore services, and the need to be entirely self-motivated and self-sufficient. As a result, and as the review of the literature shows, support services are an essential service for international students. From the interviews, it seems that it is better for these services to be offered according to international students’ culture so that their satisfaction rises. For example, international students mostly prefer to study at night and it is important for them to be able to use the library at night time. International students need individuals working at the student counselling centre to be familiar, to some extent, with their culture, customs and traditions.

5.5.3. Students’ negative experiences when studying at RMIT University

Although the analysis of the interviews indicated that most of the students were satisfied with their overall experience, some negative points raised included using English as a second language, accents, knowledge and skills of lecturers, cultural differences, and interaction with local people, financial difficulties, and personal issues. It could not be expected that international students will always be satisfied with the university and all amenities they use during their study. When the students were asked whether they have had any negative experiences during their education at RMIT, almost all had something to say. They said that the positive points they identified can be negative points if they do not function correctly. These negative points can be divided into two categories. The first is related to the students themselves, such as problems with the English language, homesickness, financial problems and personal problems. The second category is related to the university, such as the
lecturers’ abilities, competence, skills, accent, cultural problems and communication with local students.

This question seemed to be the climax of the interviews, because by asking this question, the students felt they could express their problems and mention some of their negative experiences. Using the English language properly and culture shock were negative experiences common to all interviewed students. These findings are in accordance with the result of Andrade’s (2006) study in which adjustment challenges are primarily attributable to English language proficiency and culture. These findings are also supported by Mori’s (2000) findings that language difficulties appear to be the most challenging issue for the majority of international students.

For instance, a Chinese student was very upset because although she was satisfied with her theoretical course and she could pass it with an acceptable score, she could not pass the training course. She started crying when she was expressing her negative experience and said that she did her best but she had problems with communicating during her professional placement. She had to spend her placement in a school where students spoke English with a strong accent, and because she was not good at English, she could not understand what they said and they could not understand what she said. As a result, she communicated less and this caused her supervisor to not be satisfied with her work. The supervisor reported to the university that she needed to repeat the course. A student from the United Arab Emirates said that he has to read a paragraph two or three times to understand it, which means that it takes him a very long time to study, such that he does not have enough time for peripheral studies. He said that he always feels like he is behind others. Hayes and Lin (1994) stated that
language barriers often hinder international students from socially interacting with local students.

According to Andrade (2006), some universities have established support services to assist international students with their studies. These include English-language courses, tutoring, and supplemental courses that focus on specific academic content and skills. These interventions are examined now to determine their effects on international student adjustment and achievement. The results of the quantitative data analysis shows that the learning support services provided by RMIT University is one of the strongest indicators of students’ satisfaction at this university. These findings are in line with the results of Andrade’s (2006) research suggesting that the curriculum of English language courses may affect English skills, academic performance and student retention.

The remarkable point is that one of the requirements for entering RMIT University is having an International English Language Testing System certificate that indicates that students can pass their courses in English. Despite this, most students have problems with English. Johnson (1988) found that at an institution for which the minimum Test of English as a Foreign Language or International English Language Testing System test score required for admission is low, these scores may correlate strongly with academic performance. Non-native speakers of English may be unsuccessful because of an inadequate command of English. It can be stated that the prerequisite for entering RMIT University should be having an English score higher than the present cut-off. Identifying and solving the English problems of students is crucial for their success in finishing their studies. A student who has language problems does not have the motivation to actively participate in class and group activities.
The analysis of the interviews showed that there is a relationship between international students’ proficiency in English and interaction with domestic students. When a student cannot communicate with other students during the placement, how can they communicate with local students who are adults? As was stated by the international students, one of the negative experiences at RMIT is communicating and developing and maintaining relationships with local students. International students found that local students were not eager to communicate with them, and most of the time in class they sat with other local students in a group separate from international students.

Communication between international students and local students can help international students to have a better understanding of the society and environment in which they are living. Communication also increases local students’ mutual understanding of the different cultures of international students. But when this communication does not exist, international students feel that something is missing, and sometimes it is very hard for them to express this feeling. One of the international students said that he felt that sometimes, local students are not willing to look at him. In line with the findings of this study, Volet and Ang (1998) state that one of the most disturbing aspects of the internationalisation of Australian university campuses is the lack of interaction between Australian and international students. One student from Sri Lanka named it cultural shock, which he experienced not only in the university campus but also in the society. He stated that the environment in Australia was totally different from the environment in which he had grown up and studied, and that entering the university had been a great shock for him. To get over cultural shock, Oberg (2006) claims that international students have to know the people of the host country, and this is impossible.
without knowing their language. Again, this shows the importance of English proficiency, which is necessary for international students.

Regarding the cultural shock issue, it seems that the university in general and lecturers in particular can have a critical role. For example, the university can promote local students’ understanding by holding cultural ceremonies from different countries for different occasions such as the National Day, Independence Day, or the beginning of the spring season. This can be considered as an effective instrument for making relationships and communication between international and local students. Lecturers can encourage international and local students to join together for group assignments or group studies.

Individual privacy is highly respected in the Australian community and this is the reason why, in most cases, lecturers and even RMIT University hesitate to ask some even basic information from students. As an international student, I have witnessed this privacy custom both in the interviews and during study, and this can limit the university to some extent. For instance, RMIT University could stipulate that the students are required to participate in some cultural gatherings held by the university, regardless of whether this requirement can disturb students’ privacy. RMIT University could also create a virtual environment on the internet for the students from all classes or courses, where the students are required to be a member and where they can communicate. It is possible to stipulate that all international and local students are required to participate in orientation day activities, or encourage them to take tours outside the university to get familiar with each other where participating in these tours can be considered as a special bonus or an additional score for some lessons or courses. Or in the first session of a course, lecturers could ask local students to pair up with an international student until the end of the semester.
Volet and Ang (1998) state that international and multicultural student campuses represent ideal social forums for promoting cultural understanding, fostering tolerance of diversity, discovering alternative ways of thinking and developing intercultural skills. Therefore, the interaction between international and local students is worthy of being on the university’s main agenda.

Research shows that student interactions are important in developing cognitive understandings (King, 2002; Lisi, 2002; Welikala & Watkins, 2008) because students bring different educational experiences and disciplinary backgrounds to the learning task. Research has also found that interaction is an important arena for the development of cognitive ability (Ryan & Hellmundt, 2005; Sheets, 2005) and offers opportunities for learning (Ryan & Viete, 2009). In addition, peer interaction can provide learners with a greater sense of belonging and support, which may have a positive impact on students’ retention and learning achievements (Eames & Stewart, 2008; Huijser, Kimmins, & Evans, 2008). According to Tinto (1975), colleges and universities are organisations composed of two interacting systems: an academic system and a social system.

The presence of international students has made the RMIT University environment and campus internationalised, and the students mentioned it as one of the advantages compared with other universities. This finding is consistent with the findings of of Klineberg (1970), Eide (1970), Paige (1990) and Mestenhauser (2013). This research has shown that a large number of international students can serve both as cultural carriers and resources and as links between cultures. It has been assumed that these cultural links could help reduce inter-group tension, prejudice, hostility and discriminatory behaviour, and to help increase international understanding and cooperation (B. Baron & Bachmann, 1987).
The learning environment for international students needs care and protection. This should include the class environment, lecturers, restaurants, library, and the furniture arrangement and decorations in the class. The role of local students is highlighted by Nesdale and Todd (1993) who state that the objectives of internationalisation of university education would be achieved if both local and Australian students were fully committed to developing intercultural awareness and understanding and accepting each other. In summary, because one of the most harrowing experiences of international students is interaction with local students and the experience of cultural differences, it seems necessary for the university to consider these issues for international students’ satisfaction.

Other distressing issues that international students experience are financial problems and the difficulties arising from them. Most of the international students (especially the undergraduate students) are not financially supported by any organisation. Their families have to pay for tuition fees, educational and living expenses. This issue preoccupies undergraduate international students. In their study about international students’ finance in Australian Universities, Forbes-Mewett, Marginson, Nyland, Ramia, and Sawir (2009) conclude that the majority of international students experience serious financial difficulties. While it may be agreed that international students should have examined living expenses and educational costs in Australia (and at RMIT University) before coming to study, according to Forbes-Mewett et al. (2009), the two primary reasons given for financial difficulties were a deficiency of pre-arrival knowledge on the cost of living and studying and exchange rate fluctuations; budgeting has also been identified as a significant problem.

International students believe that it is not fair to pay the university library for printing assignments. In the interviews, a student from Singapore said that she had to pay twenty
dollars to print one assignment because it included some colour pages. Another student said that he had to pay 300 to 400 dollars each month just for commuting, which was very expensive for him. Besides these dissatisfactions, the high price of rental accommodation was another issue that international students complained about. It was interesting that when they were asked why they did not live near the university to avoid paying a lot for commuting, some said that their campus is out of the city and living there was very boring for them. One said that he had lived near the university for some time and because most of his friends were living in the city, he could not communicate with them because of the long distance between them. His friends always told him how they spent their free time with each other mostly in the city. He became depressed and felt that he had to rent a house in the city and tolerate its high rental fee and commuting costs as well. This finding is agreement with Cambiano et al., (2000) who has found that inconsistency and isolation are predictors of students dropping out of their undergraduate studies.

The students interviewed said that RMIT University, which is a great and important university, can negotiate with the relevant authorities to give students some discounts for using public transportation or make printing free of charge for undergraduate students. They also said that these measures would be a great help for them and make them satisfied with the university. Because international students are a good source of revenue for RMIT University, the university should strive to make students financially satisfied. This could also be done indirectly by offering vouchers for printing in stores outside of the university or providing vouchers for food and other goods.

The most important finding related to this section of the study is the research by Li and Killian (1999). They examined patterns of attrition at a Mid-western research university in the
United States of America and found that students’ financial status is an important factor in persistence (retention) in higher education. As a result, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between international students’ financial status, their satisfaction and their retention.

Another problem that the international students named as a negative experience is personal issues, such as doing too many assignments, homesickness or failure in time management. Most students’ personal problems are related to them being strangers in Australia and not coming from an English-speaking background. Some students pointed out that they have to read a text more than three times to understand it completely. This affects time management, and it seems that their assignments are a burden and they cannot manage their time appropriately. Because these students are far away from family and friends, they become frustrated and they feel down. This problem can be lessened to some extent by improving their English proficiency and communicating and developing relationships with local students and local people out of the university such as their neighbours. As in this research, Li and Killian (1999) found a variety of reasons for personal problems, and the most often endorsed reasons were grouped as academic factors, personal factors, and financial factors.

Most individuals who decide to study abroad are determined to manage their tasks. Self-esteem and self-confidence can be the keys to managing this problem. A student who has self-confidence can make friends and can even develop relationships with his or her lecturers. Ward and Masgoret (2004) studied international students’ life in New Zealand and found that increased contact with New Zealanders was related to positive academic, social and psychological outcomes for international students. Their findings also suggest that improving relations between international students and members of the wider community warrant
increased attention. The importance of identification and involvement with a university cannot be understated, as has been discussed in the literature review.

Through this research I have realised that the university can have a crucial role in decreasing international students’ personal problems by motivating and stimulating students. Encouragement, close relationships with lecturers and local students, and periodical gatherings of international and local students with or without the presence of faculty members, are all factors that decrease international students’ personal problems and make them satisfied.

5.6. Theme Three: International student retention

Student retention is one of the greatest challenges for universities, and there is a significant body of research that focuses on factors that contribute to student attrition and strategies designed to increase retention rates (Yorke & Thomas, 2003; Zimitat, 2006). However, in Australia, almost 30% of first-year students (local and international) indicate their intention to leave study by the end of the year (Krause et al., 2005).

This challenge is intensified when universities have more international students. When a university has a large number of international students, university staff members encounter different cultures, tastes, and as a result, different requests. RMIT University is not exempt from this.

The results of the quantitative analysis showed that all components of internationalised curriculum have significant relationships with retention. It means that the relationship between the Academic Approach and Student Retention factors is positive and significant, the relationship between the Course Content and Student Retention factors was positive and significant, and the relationships between Teaching Method 1 and Teaching Method 2 were
positive. Based on the quantitative analysis, the Student Satisfaction factor is also positively associated with Student Retention. From the interviewees’ statements, the relationship between internationalised curriculum and student retention, and the relationship between their satisfaction and their retention, can be inferred. This is discussed in the following section.

5.6.1. Goal commitments

When the interview participants were asked about what motivated them to continue their education at RMIT University and what their goals were, they all referred to two points: the first was their desire to finish their studies successfully and the second was to find a good job. The findings of this study accord with the results of the Cambriano et al. (2000) study where students who had goals were more likely to remain enrolled in institutions.

Students stated that reasons such as paying high tuition fees and being away from family and friends encouraged them to think more about a bright and promising future that would happen when they graduated from university. Therefore, their commitment to their goal makes them finish studies at RMIT University. A noticeable point that arose during interviews was that students were very worried about their educational expenses and this had made them think about their goals more and continue their studies with great effort until they graduate. In addition, almost all students noted that high university expenses do not allow them change their path. In a similar vein, Cabrera, Stampen, and Hansen’s (1990) findings indicate that financial variables moderate the effect of goal commitment on persistence.

International students stated that they had chosen their path correctly, and making that choice was an indicator of their satisfaction with RMIT University and all that remained was for them to focus on graduating. Commitment is the mutual desire to continue the relationship and, importantly, a willingness to work to ensure its continuation (Wilson, 1995); therefore,
commitment it is a factor influencing student retention (Tinto, 1993). The students also claimed that RMIT University had provided them with the conditions to ensure and guarantee their future. When they know that a bright future is waiting for them, they try to reach their goals. Thus the appropriate selection of a university was an important factor in students’ graduation and retention. In line with the findings of this study, Tomas (2002) claimed that the fit between the individual’s and the institution’s characteristics strongly influences the student’s goal commitment and retention. In addition, Schertzer and Schertzer (2004) believe that in education, “any effort to attract students whose needs better fit what the individual academic institution has to offer” (p. 80) can maintain or increase the levels of retention.

Most of the students interviewed said that they were in contact with students who had graduated from RMIT, and asked these graduates about their situation after graduation. The success of graduates in finding jobs makes the current students more committed to their goals and encourages them to finish their studies with enthusiasm.

The findings indicate that students benefit from communicating with each other and consider this vital. These relationships help them reduce potential risks from the moment they come to Australia and start studying at RMIT University to the time they graduate. Because the environment of Australia in general and RMIT University in particular are strange to international students, these relationships can reduce their concerns and worries, and as a result bring satisfaction. For instance, when a student wants to choose a course, he or she could ask students who have passed the course about the lecturers’ teaching methods and choose the lecturer who has more in common with his or her mood and who can give him or her satisfaction. This satisfaction can cause the student retention.
Cabrera et al. (1993) found that the effect of social integration on goal commitment was statistically significant. Pascarella and Terenzini (1980) claim that goal commitment, academic integration, social integration and institutional commitment have a significant effect on retention. For example, a student from the United Arab Emirates said joyfully that he was waiting for graduation because one of his friends who finished his studies at RMIT was offered a good job soon after graduation, and he was sure that he too would find a good job after graduation.

It can be concluded that considering goals can bring students’ satisfaction to the fore and affect retention. Because the goal is important, a student tries to choose the safest and the best tool to reach his or her goal. Because the student considers education as a way to reach their goal and has chosen RMIT University as the instrument for reaching his or her goal, it is necessary for the university to consider student needs from the beginning of their studies through to graduation.

### 5.6.2. Institutional commitments

Commitment has been one of the most frequently used variables for determining the strength of a marketing relationship, and has been viewed as an important antecedent to customer retention (Peltier, Schibrowsky, & Nill, 2004). When the students were asked about their commitment to the university and their retention, they referred to factors such as the general environment of the university, provision of a place for completing an internship, the course they study, lecturers, friends and classmates, and the large number of international students at RMIT University. Ackerman and Schibrowsky (2007) claim that students who perceive a mutual and strong commitment between themselves and the college are more likely to remain enrolled and are more likely to recommend the university to friends.
The interviewed students stated that the university had provided an environment that made them stay at the university until they graduated. They felt some kind of belonging to the university. This was a common point in the interview and in the students’ responses to the questionnaire about their retention. In the interviews, the students stated that cultural and social activities at the university, along with preparing an environment for relationships and communications outside the classroom, raised the quality of their experience. This result is consistent with the findings of Tinto (1993), Grayson (1997) and Pascarella et al. (1997) that student involvement in the academic and social activities of institutions typically increases the possibility that they continue their studies at the same university. In addition, close relationships and communications with lecturers have caused their persistence (retention) until they graduate from RMIT University.

In the survey questionnaire, when the respondents were asked to score the items related to their retention, they gave the highest scores to the following items:

- At RMIT there are enough activities to develop my skills outside of my program
- I have enough opportunities to discuss my academic work with teaching staff
- RMIT generally responds well to student feedback.

McNairy (1996) and Parker (1998) believe that a lack of appropriate social and cultural activities is one of the structural institutional barriers against student retention. In this research, it is also important for students to have social, cultural and sporting activities apart from studying. These activities are more important for international students who are far from their country and family and are keen to fill this gap with peripheral activities. Laing, Robinson, and Johnston (2005) argue that to assist students in having a positive study experience irrespective of their year or level, an understanding of their needs and expectations
is required. Only then can effective strategies be developed to assist students’ transition to university learning and, consequently, arrest attrition rates. Therefore, when these conditions are provided for them by the university, students will undoubtedly have sense of belonging to the university, which in turn will lead to their retention. The university’s recognition and understanding of the students’ requests will pave the way for students’ satisfaction and retention.

In conclusion, because commitment to the university is one of the reasons for student retention, the researcher believes that commitment to the university is a mutual relationship. A student is committed to the university when the university brings him or her satisfaction. Therefore, the university has a direct role in students’ commitment, satisfaction and retention.

5.6.3. Continued study at RMIT University

When the interviewed students were asked about continuing their studies at RMIT, some of them were seniors who expressed their satisfaction with RMIT and said there are no reasons to quit studying in the short time left, and that they would definitely continue until they graduated. Some other students stated that they would continue studying because they were satisfied with their experience to date.

Some students said that if they wanted to continue their education at higher levels, they would not choose RMIT University. One reason for this is RMIT University’s low ranking in comparison with the ranking of other universities; therefore, students tend to pursue their further study (master’s or PhD) at another university with a higher ranking. A Malaysian student said that he did not want to continue his study at RMIT University because other students had told him that RMIT University did not provide facilities such as an office and desktop computer for master’s and doctorate students, while other universities provide these
services. He even stated that the quality of facilities for studying at higher levels at universities in his own country was better than that of RMIT University and he did not see any reason to continue his education at RMIT University.

The researcher believes that the point that the Malaysian student made is very important and can be the subject of future research. Because competition between the universities and even between countries for recruiting international students is very intense with all universities trying to appeal to students, RMIT University should adopt a new definition of student retention that includes students studying at higher levels as well. Student retention can bring about advantages for RMIT University apart from economic advantages. Students at post-graduate levels can raise the ranking of the university by doing research in different fields and publishing books and articles. A high ranking in research will increase RMIT University’s appeal and reputation, which in turn causes higher student enrolment and improves student retention at all levels.

Interestingly, for the quantitative data analysis, when the students were asked “if they had the opportunity, would choose RMIT again for further study”, they gave this item a significant score, so that it had the fourth highest ranking among 12 items related to the student retention factor. Another noticeable point from the quantitative data analysis is that students gave the lowest score to the item, “RMIT is friendly to people from all backgrounds”. Because students gave the highest score to “I have enough opportunities to discuss my academic work with teaching staff” this means that they are satisfied with their lecturers and this opinion on friendliness cannot be related to the lecturers. There are two other options: employees and local students. This question is somehow asking about racism at university and regarding the lowest score students gave to this item (“RMIT is friendly to people from all
backgrounds”), it can be concluded that international students feel racism to some extent at RMIT University and this can be due to employees or local students.

International students complained about having little interaction with local students and because they gave the lowest score to the questionnaire item “RMIT is friendly to people from all backgrounds”, it can be said that there is a connection between these two. Students believe that RMIT University is unfriendly to people because they are not in contact and do not have interaction with local students and they are not satisfied with the degree of connection and relationship. It is noticeable that among all items measuring factors of internationalised curriculum and students’ satisfaction and retention, the item “RMIT is friendly to people from all backgrounds” was given the lowest score, which means that students have the highest dissatisfaction in this regard.

The dissatisfaction of international students in the poor relationship and contact with local students can be thought of as a part of culture shock. International students believe that if they have a relationship and contact with local students, they can, to some extent, reduce problems such as the English language barrier or depression. Therefore, the importance of the relationship between international and local students must be the focus of the university authorities’ attention.

5.7. Recommending RMIT University to Others

Based on the working definition of student retention in this study, which includes recommending the university to other family members and friends, it seems necessary for the university to consider students’ requests so they will recommend the university to their friends and other family members. According to Douglas, McClelland, and Davies (2008), the aim of
institutes should be to try to maximise students’ satisfaction with their experience while they are at university to retain students as well as to improve recruitment.

When the students were asked whether they would recommend the university to their family members and friends, all of them unanimously stated that they would recommend RMIT University. Facilities, teaching quality, reputation and training courses are the main reasons students would recommend RMIT University to others. However, Douglas et al. (2006) found that even when student satisfaction ratings were at an acceptable level, a significant number of respondents claimed that they would not recommend their institution to others. The surprising point of this research is that, although some students believed that the curriculum at RMIT University is not internationalised, and despite the quantitative analysis that revealed that international students are not satisfied with the course content provided by RMIT, they would still recommend RMIT to others. This is somehow contradictory because the item of overall satisfaction received the lowest rating among the other eight items of satisfaction. In the quantitative analysis, the item, “If I have the opportunity undertake further studies in the future, I would like to study again at RMIT” received the second highest rank, which shows the high level of retention.

RMIT University can strengthen this by recognising and realising why students are still loyal to the university and will recommend it to others, although their general satisfaction with the university is not high. Students said they would recommend the university to others due to some reasons such as good facilities, teaching quality, reputation, and provision of placement. It is notable that the reasons that the students identified are those mentioned in the literature as the reasons for students’ retention. The literature review highlighted a substantial body of research covering the factors influencing student retention. Carter and Yam (2013) state that
quality of teaching is important for improving student retention. Bush, Ferrell, and Thomas (1998) and Standifird (2005) claim that reputation is very important for attracting and retaining students because student satisfaction is supposed to be positively related to institution reputation (Johnson, Gustafsson, Andreassen, Lervik, & Cha, 2001; Wallin Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998). Regarding the relationship between course professional placement and retention, Habley and McClanahan’s (2004) report for Australian College Testing finds that the course professional placement is one of the most important elements of students’ retention and degree completion.

The analysis of the interviews shows that most of the international students were satisfied with the professional placements offered by RMIT University. Therefore, the university should make an attempt to maintain this. This service offered to students by RMIT University has two advantages. First, it increases the students’ level of satisfaction. Second, because most places offered by the University for an internship are well-known and some are internationally recognised, students will have the chance to be employed by the same companies and organisations after graduation. This can be an impressive factor in increasing the reputation of the university. This finding agrees with the findings of Chadwick and Ward (1987) in which the most significant variables to explain recommendation motivations are the value of the degree in the job market and instructional interaction with faculties.

Students are the university’s customers. Therefore, customer satisfaction can have many advantages. One is that the advertisements made by the customer (word-of-mouth advertisements) benefit the university as well as increasing retention.
5.8. Factors Causing Students to Drop Out

When the students were asked about the reasons for dropping out or quitting while they were studying, students referred to different reasons such as financial problems, English language problems, homesickness, the difficulty of courses, lack of information about courses, and cultural shock.

Crosling, Heagney and Thomas (2009) argue that there are many reasons why students leave higher education, and some of these are beyond the control of institutions. However, from this research’s findings it seems that, quitting studies or dropping out can be reduced through the university officials’ tact and discernment.

Because some studies have pointed to non-cognitive factors, such as social, environmental and interpersonal factors to explain students’ retention (e.g., Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005), it would seem that university staff and lecturers can get closer to students by making informal relationships with students and becoming aware of their problems in a friendly environment and reporting those problems to university authorities to solve them. As Ackerman and Schibrowsky (2007) state, the process of getting close to the students should include gaining an understanding of the reasons why students leave because positive student-faculty interactions have been beneficial for the students’ retention. Giving students special privileges and rewards can encourage them to stay at university. Students need encouragement for retention and this can be achieved by infusing the belief that a student would be able to finish her or his studies and graduate from the university despite all difficulties.

Bandura and Locke (2003) suggest that, “self-efficacy beliefs are rooted in the core belief that one has the power to produce desired effects” (p. 87). Moulton, Brown, and Lent
(1991) found statistically significant relationships between self-efficacy beliefs, academic performance and outcomes. Individuals with stronger self-efficacy beliefs performed better and persisted longer at a variety of academic behaviours. It should be considered that international students have been supported by their families until recently, and have now come to another country with a new environment and they definitely need special support.

Undoubtedly, students’ satisfaction with the university causes their retention until they graduate, and recognising students’ problems can have a fundamental role in retention. Students are constantly in contact with each other and a student–student relationship is different from the student–university relationship. In most cases, students share their problems with each other; therefore, asking students about the reasons for other students’ dropping can be worthwhile.

Interview participants suggested some ways for preventing student dropout such as supporting international students, recommending international students for more consideration by lecturers, better understanding of the international students by the lecturers, controlling the cost of university, offering financial support, creating a friendly environment, offering free English classes, counselling for international students, giving them responsibilities, making them join groups, and getting them involved in different activities of the university.

Most of the suggestions by the students are of the same type. These suggestions refer to the importance of social connections and a sense of belonging to the university. Most students suggested that social and cultural activities and giving students responsibilities are of high importance for the prevention of student dropout.

It is notable that in the quantitative data analysis of student retention, students gave the highest score to the item “At RMIT, there are enough activities to develop my skills outside of
my program”, which shows that the findings of the qualitative part of this part of study are in accordance with the results of the interviews and also supports the importance of peripheral activities at the university.

5.9. Impact of Internationalised Curriculum on Student Retention

One of the questions to students was whether internationalised curriculum had any effect on their retention. The students’ answers were divergent and interesting. Students stated that their goal is to achieve a better life by having a decent job in the future, and the university’s internationalised curriculum will help them to achieve this goal. Therefore, they will continue their studies until graduation. In addition, almost all students expressed that internationalised curriculum meant that they could use their achievements and skills internationally. They concluded that if one is satisfied with what one has achieved, one would return to its source. One of the students gave the example, “if you buy something from a supermarket and you are satisfied with your shopping, you would definitely return, so if I’m satisfied with education at RMIT and what I have achieved there, I have a good reason to continue education there”. Although all interviewed students stated that they will continue their education at RMIT until they graduate, some of them said that if they have the chance to pursue their studies at higher levels, they may choose other universities. An interesting point is that two of the interviewees believed that the curriculum at RMIT is not internationalised but they will continue their education until they graduate and even recommend the university to their others.

What is inferred from the results of the interviews with the students is that international students have a general satisfaction with the curriculum that has made them continue their
studies or recommend the university to others, even though they were dissatisfied with some issues. With the working definition of student retention offered in this study, it seems important for RMIT University to carefully watch for all aspects and issues in the path of students’ education from the day of enrolment until graduation.

While students’ needs are different, there is a strong sense of commonality. For example, although Chinese and African students’ social and cultural activities are different, they consider these activities as one of the reasons for students’ retention. Also, although a Chinese student’s expectation of lecturers is different from those of a student from the Middle East, both expect lecturers to be flexible. This convergence can build a colourful environment at RMIT University as an aspect of the internationalised curriculum.

The results of the quantitative data analysis show that although the hypothesis for the relationship between the course content and student satisfaction is not supported, the hypothesis for the relationship between the course content and student retention is supported. In other words, there is a direct relationship between the internationalised curriculum and student retention. This relationship is confirmed by all interviewed students stating that they would recommend RMIT University to their friends and relatives. Although the relationship between student satisfaction and student retention has been mentioned several times in the literature, this study shows that students who are not satisfied with the course content will stay in the university until graduation and recommend the university to others. In this study the curriculum is composed of four components (Academic Approach, Course Content, Teaching Method 1 and Teaching Methods 2) and it can be concluded that:
1. The other components of an internationalised curriculum including Academic Approach, Teaching Methods 1 and Teaching Method 2 are so important that they could lead to student retention.

2. Other components of the curriculum are of great importance to international students.

3. RMIT University has been successful in presenting Academic Approach, Teaching Method 1 and Teaching Method 2.
Chapter 6. Contributions, Limitations, Recommendations and Implications

6.1. Contributions

This research makes a major contribution to the literature. The purpose of this study is to make a contribution to the body of work on international student satisfaction and student retention in higher education settings. Although there are a large number of studies that focus on factors influencing student retention, there are relatively few studies that focus on the impact of the internationalised curriculum on student retention. Thus, in this research, the researcher attempts to identify the relationship between the internationalised curriculum and student retention by developing an integrated model that combines internationalised curriculum, student satisfaction and student retention.

This study confirms the significant role of the internationalised curriculum on student retention. The contribution of this study to the body of knowledge is that the conceptual model developed in this study can help universities to identify factors that contribute to student retention. The current findings add important understandings of internationalised curriculum through the working definition of curriculum as everything with which students are involved from enrolment through to graduation.

The focus on four dimensions of curriculum (Academic Approach, Course Content, teaching Method 1 and Teaching Method 2) and their relationship with student retention has provided significant insights into understanding the importance of different elements of curriculum affecting student retention. Practical outcomes may result from this study with regards to understanding the components of the internationalised curriculum and their relationships with student retention. This may help to create better institutional policies and
inform better decision making for university officials and administrators as they strive to implement internationalisation. In this study, it has been assumed that the curriculum at RMIT University has been internationalised, further research should focus on whether or not the curriculum at the university has been internationalised.

6.2. Limitations

Limitations of this study may be in relation to collecting either qualitative or quantitative data. A limitation of the study relates to the small sample of interview participants. In addition, the conclusions that were drawn from the interview findings were based on what the students reported, which can be subjective and dependent on factors and situations that are indeterminable. In addition, when the researcher first started his PhD study, his intention was to collect specific survey data on the retention of international students; however the researcher was advised that students were already asked to complete many surveys and he would be unlikely to recruit a large enough sample. The researcher was then offered the opportunity of using questionnaires conducted by the RMIT Survey Service Centre. Using secondary data rather than a questionnaire that had been developed specifically for this study is a limitation for this study.

Because English is not the first language of the researcher, interpreting the data conducted in interviews and analysing and discussing the data and findings may also be a limitation of the study. Confusion about the meaning of some questions and terms may have caused some misinterpretation by participants, particularly when answering the questionnaire not in the presence of the researcher.
6.3. Future Research

With the ever-changing demands of international students, it is necessary for more research to better understand the expectations of today’s international students regarding the curriculum. Because most institutions desire to have more international students, further research on curriculum as defined in this study would be recommended. However, while higher education is a viable and essential market segment, especially in Australia, internationalised curriculum would play a vital role. Investigation through different higher education providers such as colleges and universities, either private or public, would be recommended. Because different institutions have different curricula, further research based on each institution will be beneficial.

Most previous studies are based on undergraduate students, but because postgraduate students play a significant role in student retention, research on internationalised curriculum and student retention on postgraduate students is recommended.

The gap between overall satisfaction of students toward RMIT University and individual item satisfaction is significantly high. Exploring this meaningful gap in future studies is recommended.

6.4. Recommendations and Implications

There are number of recommendations that can be drawn from this study providing evidence for improving students retention based on the internationalised curriculum.

1. Cultural nuances need to be considered to improve the level of international student satisfaction toward course content as one of the curriculum components.
2. Research similar to this needs to be conducted in each of the university’s schools for better understanding of internationalisation of the curriculum in different schools.

3. International students should begin their university study with a higher score on the International English Language Testing System to get the full benefit of their university courses. Therefore, prospective students should strive to enhance their English level before commencement of their study.

4. Because international students believe that the course content at RMIT University is not internationalised, new lines of research might investigate the course content provided by the University to find out the causes of international students’ dissatisfaction in this regard.

5. Because the University offers some courses that are only provided by RMIT University, the university should encourage the internationalisation of those courses to increase its reputation in student satisfaction and retention.

6. Because international students in this study believe course content at RMIT University is not internationalised, implementation of the conceptual model of this research will require officials to develop new strategies that focus on course content.

7. Because the overall satisfaction among international students towards RMIT University is significantly low, the university should make innovative attempts to increase the overall satisfaction of international students.
8. RMIT University can create strategies to increase the relationships between international and local students to improve the level of international students’ satisfaction and retention.

9. While internationalisation of the course content is seen as a positive development, international students argued that course content at the University is not internationalised and the internationalisation of curricula should not be limited to the content alone.
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Appendices

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Appendix C. Semi-structured Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview about your experiences in RMIT University. The purpose of this interview is to identify which aspects of the internationalization of curricula are most influential in determining your satisfaction during your study at RMIT. I will begin with some general questions about you and then we will start talking about your college experiences.

• Do you have any questions before we begin?

General student background information:

1. First, I am going to ask you some questions about your background: please, tell me about your age, place of birth, commencement year and field of study.

Assessment of the faculty in fostering internationalization:

2. Is internationalized curriculum recognized, encouraged, financially supported, rewarded and integrated into your university climate? (through organizational strategies identified by Bremer and van der Wende, 1995)

For example, do you think the institution provides

2.1. curricula dealing with an international subject?

2.2. curricula which prepare students for defined international professions?

2.3. the content that has been specifically designed for international students?

2.4. teaching methods at international level

Assessment of student satisfaction
3. What attracted you about the RMIT?

4. How are your studies going?

5. Are you enjoying any particular courses? Why? Can you give some examples of how this course is helping you make progress in your studies?

6. Can you give some examples, from your experience, of good teaching? Why would you call this good teaching? What about bad teaching? Why was this negative experience for you?

7. What are you finding difficult in your study life? (Course work, living here, language etc.) Can you give some examples of how this is preventing you from making progress in your studies?

8. What are the aspects of this university that you find satisfying? Why?

9. What sorts of issues are key concerns for international student?

**Assessment of student retention**

1. What have been your goals that have kept you motivated to continue university?

2. Do you feel any sense of belonging on at RMIT?

3. Would you like continue study in this university?

4. Do you recommend RMIT to your friends or family members for study?

**Impact of internationalized curriculum on student retention**

Results of survey showed that

5. Do you think the internationalized curriculum have an impact on international student satisfaction? If so, what is the impact?

6. Do you think the student satisfaction have an impact on their retention? If so, what is the impact?
7. Do you have any questions before we end?

Thank you very much for participating in this study.
Dear International Undergraduates Students

I am a PhD student in School of Education and I hope to conduct interviews with 20 international undergraduate students studying at RMIT University. This interview will run for no more than half an hour on the topic of ‘International Students’ retention in the Australian higher education setting: the role of internationalization of the curriculum. I invite you to be interviewed by me, if you agree to participate, please contact me via following contact details and I will arrange the time and place that is convenient for you.

**Tex message or contact to my mobile: 0431814936**
**Or sending an email to: s3336980@student.rmit.edu.au**

Your cooperation and participation is very important for me and I do appreciate that in advance.
MohammadBagher Naghdi
PhD Student
RMIT University
School of Education
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

**Project Title:** ‘International Student’s retention in the Australian higher education setting: the role of internationalization of the curriculum

**Investigators:**

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<td>Dr. Richard Johnson</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Richard.johnson@rmit.edu.au">Richard.johnson@rmit.edu.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>2th Supervisor</td>
<td>Dr. Andrew Gilbert</td>
<td><a href="mailto:andrew.gilbert@rmit.edu.au">andrew.gilbert@rmit.edu.au</a></td>
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<td>Phd Candidate</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:s3336980@sstudents.rmit.edu.au">s3336980@sstudents.rmit.edu.au</a></td>
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Dear …………..,

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by RMIT University. Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate. If you have any questions about the project, please ask one of the investigators.

I am MohammadBagher Naghdi an international PhD student at RMIT University, School of Education. My research is about ‘International Student’s retention in the Australian higher education setting: the role of internationalization of the curriculum’. As you know, internationalizing the curriculum is a high priority for higher education in Australia and
especially for RMIT University. I am very interested to explore the factors that contribute to student satisfaction and retention particularly in respect to the internationalized curriculum.

This project has received clearance from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) with the project ethics number (CHEAN A&B-2000603-11-11). My supervisor is Dr. Richard Johnson, and his office is located in School of Education – Bundoora – Building 220, Floor 4, Room 27, in the event of you having any questions, he will be happy to talk with you by phone, face to face or you can ask your questions through email (johnson.johnson@rmit.edu.au).

I am conducting an interview for no more than half an hour on the topic. If you agree to be interviewed please contact me via email and I will arrange a time and place that is convenient for you.

Please feel under no obligation to volunteer to be interviewed. This research project is not related any course offering that may affect you as a student. There are no perceived risks outside your normal day-to-day activities. The information and data which are collected from participant can help RMIT University and other university providers to provide better services and making satisfy their international students.

You have right:

- To withdraw from participation at any time
- To request that any recording cease
- To have any questions answered at any time.
- To have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed.

Your participation in the interview will be treated confidentially and you will not be identified by name, in any other way in the research or publications. Data collected in this
The project will be kept secure in a locked file by my supervisor Dr. Richard Johnson and data will be destroyed after a minimum period (one year). On the other hand, if you have any complaints about the conduct of the research you can contact the Executive Officer, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (http://www.rmit.edu.au/governance/committees/hrec) or (http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=2jqrnb7hnpyo).

I thank you for your cooperation and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,
Mohammad Bagher Naghdi
PhD Candidate
School of Education
RMIT University
CONSENT FORM

I.........................................................agree to be interviewed by MohammadBagher Naghdi. I understand that the interview will take not more than half an hour. I give permission for the data generated from the interview to be used in his research and without reference to my name.

1. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the information sheet.

2. I agree to participate in the research project as described.

3. I agree for the interview to be audio recorded.

4. I acknowledge that:

   a. My participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data.

   b. The project is for the purpose of research.

   c. The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.

   d. The security of the research data will be protected during and after completion of the study.

Participant’s Consent

Participant: ___________________________ Date: _______________
(Signature)