

# Australian transnational education programmes in South East Asia

Student satisfaction with the learning environment

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In view of the strong growth of transnational education programmes in Australian universities, there is growing interest in the experiences of students participating in such programmes. This article reports on the perceived student satisfaction with several aspects of their transnational programmes, including instructors, technology, and programme management and administration. Data for the study were collected from approximately five hundred transnational students participating in eight programmes offered by four Australian universities in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam. The article outlines the findings of the study, highlighting the need for incorporating student perspectives in the provision of transnational education programmes. The article concludes by discussing the potential application of its findings in reviewing existing and planning new transnational education programmes.

## Introduction

Transnational education, often referred to as offshore education, describes all programmes in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based. With rapid expansion of the transnational education market, more and more universities join the ranks of transnational education providers, or expand their transnational education offerings. For Australia, one of the main providers of transnational education in South East Asia (Banks *et al.*, 2010), satisfying the needs of the highest demand disciplines in the region – computing and business – is of vital importance. Thus, there is growing interest in the experiences of the participating transnational students. This article responds to this interest and presents the transnational students' perspectives on their transnational education programmes; it relates the views of nearly five hundred students partici-

pating in eight programmes offered by four Australian universities in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam.

## Australian transnational education – perspectives and characteristics

There are a great number of different relationships between different types of transnational education providers, delivery mechanisms, and programmes/awards. Charting these is a difficult task, as the constantly evolving, highly complex situation includes an array of partnerships, consortia, articulation agreements, modes of delivery, public, private, off-shore, for-profit and corporate elements. Various models of teaching can also be found, ranging from full programme delivery at an offshore campus, combined face-to-face and flexible delivery option, and e-learning (Dunn & Wallace, 2006; McBurnie & Zигuras, 2007; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2010).

In terms of demand, it is estimated that the demand for transnational higher education in Asian countries (excluding China) will reach nearly 500,000 students by 2020 (OECD, 2009). This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for Australian universities, who are key transnational providers in the region. The Australian Department of Education, Science and Training estimates that, already *approximately one in every four international students in the Australian education and training system is enrolled offshore* (DEST, 2005, 7). In 2007, almost all (93 per cent) of the 71,000 Australian transnational higher education students were internal students at an offshore campus – only 4.6 per cent were external (distance education) and 2.4 per cent were multi-modal (AEI, 2009). In terms of mode of attendance, only 65 per cent of offshore students were studying full time. The top five sources of offshore students were Singapore, Malaysia, China, Hong Kong and Vietnam (AEI, 2009). While Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong have dominated transnational education provision by Australian universities over the years, recently China and Vietnam have emerged as key offshore markets (Banks *et al.*, 2010).

A typical transnational programme offered by Australian universities is in the field of study of business, information technology, and education (Denman, 2009); in the past few years, health has also emerged as a popular field of study for transnational students (AVCC, 2005). In terms of delivery mode, a typical programme relies on face-to-face teaching or supported distance education. The programme involves a partner which is a private education institution or public education institution, and awards an Australian qualification. Such programmes are offered in Singapore, Malaysia, China and Hong Kong (Universities Australia, 2009). These countries host the largest number of Australian transnational programmes, and provide the largest number of transnational students; together these markets account for more than 70 per cent of all transnational programmes of Australian universities (Universities Australia, 2009).

In terms of responsibility, the Australian university is responsible for curriculum, teaching and assessment, and quality assurance; the responsibility for provision of study location, marketing, promotion and financial administration rests with the offshore partner. Although, on the whole, the Australian university is responsible for the quality assurance of the programme, partner institutions, overseas governments, and international organisations also participate in this responsibility (Banks *et al.*, 2010).

## Student perspectives on transnational education programme effectiveness

In view of the strong growth of transnational programmes in Australian universities (Universities Australia 2009), there is growing interest in the experiences of students participating in the transnational programmes. According to Chapman and Pyvis (2005, 40), no one is in a better position to comment on these experiences than students themselves: they are the ultimate ‘insiders and experts’; yet, the voice of the student is conspicuously missing from research literature. In consideration of this need, a research study was conducted in 2007-2008 to examine the issue of transnational programme effectiveness from the student perspective (Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2010).

### Methodology

The study involved students in eight transnational computing programmes offered in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam by Australian universities; 469 students participated. Table 1 presents a breakdown of student numbers across providing universities, locales and programmes; it also includes information about the mode of study (part-time ‘p/t’, full-time ‘f/t’) and the mode of teaching (both Australian and local staff are involved in face-to-face teaching ‘both’, or local staff only ‘local’).

The choice of locales was deliberate: Hong Kong and Singapore are important markets for Australian transnational programmes, and are also well-developed territories where English is commonly spoken; hence, students participating in the study were likely to have the benefit of suitable technological infrastructure and adequate linguistic skills. Malaysia and Vietnam were chosen to check if limited technological infrastructure and language pro-

**Table 1: Number of students participating in the study**

	Hong Kong	Malaysia	Singapore	Vietnam
University1	Programme1 (N=131) p/t, both	Programme2 (N=44) f/t, both		
University2		Programme3 (N=69) f/t, local	Programme4 (N=46) p/t, local	Programme5 (N=33) f/t, local
University3	Programme6 (N=44) p/t, both	Programme7 (N=32) f/t, local		
University4			Programme8 (N=70) p/t, both	

iciency would have a bearing on student perceptions. Similarly, the choice of computing programmes was also deliberate: the intention was to seek the views of students who were technology savvy; hence, they were less likely to have negative perceptions of the use of technology in their programmes because of techno-phobia alone.

The programmes operating in part-time mode involved students who had previous approved tertiary qualifications. Students were normally in full-time employment, and usually studied six subjects per year – two subjects per term. The full-time programmes typically involved students who were high school leavers. In the programmes where teaching was shared by Australian and local academics, lecturers from Australia were responsible for the design of curriculum, detailed teaching plans, continuous and final assessment, as well as face-to-face delivery of twenty five per cent of the programmes; local lecturers taught the remaining part of the programmes. The programmes relied on the Internet for communication, e.g. subject Web sites, bulletin boards, and email. Students met with lecturers and fellow students through face-to-face sessions, and benefited from Web-based support between sessions. Programmes taught exclusively by local staff followed the curriculum detailed by the host university from Australia and accessed online resources provided by the host university; however, Australian lecturers did not participate in face-to-face teaching.

Data were collected through a quantitative survey to allow participants to note which elements of the learning experience contributed to, or limited, their satisfaction with the programme. Student satisfaction was measured on an ordinal (ranked) scale, hence non-parametric tests, such as the Wilcoxon signed-rank test and the Friedman test, were used to analyse the data. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test is used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between two related samples or two repeated measurements, and the Friedman test is appropriate for three or more related samples or repeated measurements. A difference is statistically significant

when the probability of obtaining the observed difference by chance is small, compared to a significance level; the most commonly used significance levels are 0.05, 0.01, and 0.001. It should be noted that to protect the anonymity and the privacy of Australian universities and their transnational partners, this article does not provide any specific information about the participating institutions.

## Findings and discussion

### *Student satisfaction with current programmes*

This section reports on perceived student satisfaction with several aspects of their transnational programmes, including: instructors, technology, programme management and coordination, and overall programme effectiveness. It highlights the issue of differing levels of satisfaction with University (Australian) and local (offshore) instructors among students of the evaluated programmes where both types of instructors participated in teaching. The section also presents analyses of student satisfaction with the programmes in relation to offering institution, overseas location, and types of instructors involved in programme delivery.

Table 2 presents a summary of an overall student satisfaction with various attributes of their current programmes, grouped in three broad categories of Instruction/Instructor, Technology, and Programme management and coordination; the satisfaction was measured using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated very poor, 2 – poor, 3 – average, 4 – good, and 5 indicated very good.

### *Student satisfaction with instructors and instruction*

The average ranked scores related to students' satisfaction with attributes in the Instructor/Instruction category are reported in Table 3. For each programme, the Friedman test was used to determine whether there were significant differences in student satisfaction with the attributes in this category. Student level of satisfaction varied significantly across the attributes in all programmes except Prog7.

**Table 2: Average student satisfaction with current programmes**

	University & local instructors				Local instructors only			
	Prog1 Hong Kong	Prog6 Hong Kong	Prog2 Malaysia	Prog8 Singapore	Prog3 Malaysia	Prog7 Malaysia	Prog4 Singapore	Prog5 Vietnam
Instructor/ Instruction	3.40	3.45	3.27	3.65	3.39	3.41	3.32	3.76
Technology	3.29	3.07	3.04	3.64	3.22	3.26	3.23	3.56
Management	3.13	3.13	3.17	3.62	3.21	3.42	3.15	3.50
Total satisfaction	3.27	3.22	3.15	3.64	3.27	3.36	3.23	3.61

**Table 3: Average satisfaction with Instructor/Instruction**

	University & local instructors				Local instructors only			
	Prog1 HK	Prog6 HK	Prog2 Mal	Prog8 Sin	Prog3 Mal	Prog7 Mal	Prog4 Sin	Prog5 Viet
Clarity of programme objectives, requirements, and assessments.	12.96	14.85	15.13	13.88	10.04	9.64	11.18	10.71
Time given in classes to copy down the presented lecture material.	11.26	10.98	13.14	10.83	10.18	8.14	10.23	9.02
Production quality of the lecture presentations.	12.16	14.67	15.29	13.42	11.03	10.36	10.61	8.12
Use of electronic media in lecture presentations.	12.63	14.22	12.75	13.31	11.63	12.00	9.75	10.90
Usefulness of lecture presentations in understanding the programme content.	12.42	11.52	15.93	12.81	11.76	9.47	10.75	8.87
Time taken to mark and return tests and written assignments.	10.06	6.81	11.04	8.64	7.65	9.93	8.68	6.83
Use of electronic media for assignment submission and feedback.	10.23	12.30	10.57	12.10	9.81	10.76	7.14	11.48
Use of instruction that helped you better understand the programme material.	12.64	11.93	12.38	11.40	8.08	8.98	9.92	8.69
Quality of the classrooms environment (e.g.noise)	13.40	14.42	11.23	14.00	6.73	9.47	8.83	9.23
Extent to which instructors made you feel that you were part of the class.	12.96	14.25	12.17	13.83	9.46	9.66	10.64	10.75
Instructors' communication skills.	14.41	14.49	16.70	15.07	11.65	11.19	11.81	12.12
University instructors' organisation and preparation for classes.	13.78	13.34	15.33	14.32				
Local instructors' organisation and preparation for classes.	12.64	13.92	10.21	13.82	12.46	9.88	11.11	9.23
University instructors' dedication to students and teaching.	14.03	14.73	15.70	13.23				
Local instructors' dedication to students and teaching.	14.32	14.55	11.02	14.73	11.78	11.34	11.99	11.62
University instructors' teaching ability.	16.15	14.57	16.54	15.39				
Local instructors' teaching ability.	13.79	13.30	10.06	14.57	11.03	11.12	10.76	10.44
University instructors' encouragement to participate in class.	15.32	11.82	14.81	12.25				
Local instructors' encouragement to participate in class.	14.53	13.47	11.38	13.25	10.87	8.67	9.95	9.71
Telephone/email accessibility of the University instructors outside of classes.	10.60	12.84	10.86	12.93				
Telephone/email accessibility of the Local instructors outside of classes.	12.68	11.24	10.98	12.81	8.02	10.40	8.79	10.85
Degree to which instructors encouraged communication between students, and between students and instructors.	12.11	11.22	11.42	11.56	8.43	9.86	9.61	10.10
Extent to which the programme material was sufficient to support study at home.	11.13	10.89	12.99	10.20	8.55	9.02	8.04	11.04
Overall, the University instructors were:	14.89	15.01	17.39	13.43				
Overall, the Local instructors were:	13.92	13.69	9.99	13.26	10.85	10.12	10.23	10.31
Significant at: $\alpha=0.01$ (**), $\alpha=0.05$ (*)	**	**	**	**	**		**	**

 Attribute with 1st or 2nd highest level of satisfaction.

 Attribute with lowest level of satisfaction.

 Attribute does not apply.

The table distinguishes between programmes where both Australian and local instructors were involved in face-to-face delivery (Prog1, Prog6, Prog2, and Prog8), and programmes delivered entirely by local instructors (Prog3, Prog7, Prog4, Prog5). For each programme, two attributes with the highest level of satisfaction are highlighted in dark grey, and an attribute with the lowest level of satisfaction is highlighted in light grey.

Satisfaction with the various attributes of instructors and instruction varied across programmes. However, some of the attributes recorded the highest level of satisfaction in several programmes – for example, the instructors' communication skills (Prog2, Prog8, Prog4, and Prog5) or the local instructors' dedication to students and teaching (Prog3, Prog7, Prog4, and Prog5); it should be noted, that the latter attribute scored highest only in programmes delivered entirely by local instructors. Interestingly, in programmes delivered by both Australian and local instructors, students reported the highest levels of satisfaction with attributes related to the Australian instructors.

With respect to the lowest level of satisfaction, students in different programmes were least satisfied with different attributes. However, 'the time taken to mark and return tests and written assignments' recorded the lowest scores in four programmes (Prog1, Prog6, Prog8, and Prog5).

A comparison of student satisfaction with the Australian instructors and the local instructors was also of interest, since four of the participating programmes (Prog1, Prog6, Prog2, and Prog8) involved Australian, as well as local instructors. This was important in view of the argument that transnational programmes should be of equivalent standard to the same programmes offered by the university at home (Biggs 2001; Hyam 2003; Van Damme

2001), and various university quality policies include that requirement. Table 4 shows the results of the comparison in student satisfaction between Australian and local instructors.

In terms of instructor attributes, students in all programmes reported higher levels of satisfaction with the University instructors' teaching ability and overall performance; only some of these differences were statistically significant.

It appears that within individual programmes University instructors also attracted higher levels of satisfaction. However, in Prog2 these differences were statistically significant for all but one (accessibility outside classes) aspects. This sentiment was also reflected in written comments provided by the students:

'Although University lecturers are very good with their respective subjects, they leave too soon. After that, the local lecturer might not be as good as the University lecturer, which affects the overall understanding of the subject. Ms X [University instructor] made the subject well understood.'

'It [the programme] would be more effective if the lecturers from Australia came more often.'

'Some [local] lecturers are not 100 per cent committed to teaching students' lack of confidence toward quality decrease interest in studies. No motivations [local] lecturers use harsh words and raise their voice to show anger.'

### Student satisfaction with technology

The average ranked scores related to students' satisfaction with attributes in the Technology category are reported

**Table 4: Student satisfaction with University & Local instructors (incl. preferred instructors and significance of preference)**

	<i>Prog1 Hong Kong</i>	<i>Prog6 Hong Kong</i>	<i>Prog2 Malaysia</i>	<i>Prog8 Singapore</i>
Organisation and preparation for classes.	University1 p=0.08	Local p=0.90	University1 p<0.001	University4 p=0.35
Dedication to students and teaching.	Local p=0.99	University3 p=0.96	University1 p<0.001	Local p=0.13
Teaching ability.	University1 p<0.001	University3 p=0.39	University1 p<0.001	University4 p=0.26
Encouragement of class participation.	University1 p=0.11	Local p=0.14	University1 p=0.004	Local p=0.18
Telephone/email accessibility outside of classes.	Local p<0.001	University3 p=0.11	University1 p=0.85	Local p=0.82
Overall satisfaction.	University1 p=0.18	University3 p=0.34	University1 p<0.001	University4 p=0.49

**Shading indicates a significantly greater level of satisfaction (p<0.05, using Wilcoxon test).**

**Table 5: Student satisfaction with technology**

	University & local instructors				Local instructors only			
	Prog1 HK	Prog6 HK	Prog2 Mal	Prog8 Sin	Prog3 Mal	Prog7 Mal	Prog4 Sin	Prog5 Viet
The quality of the technology used in classes.	4.23	4.70	3.60	3.49	3.86	3.40	3.74	3.94
The ease of use of technology.	4.26	4.22	4.10	3.58	4.19	3.32	3.93	3.98
The extent of programme's reliance on the use of technology in the classroom or the college.	3.91	4.02	4.18	3.73	4.21	3.66	3.83	3.93
The extent to which the programme relied on the use of technology at home.	4.04	3.88	4.32	3.98	4.24	4.35	4.43	3.41
The degree of confidence you had that classes would not be interrupted or cancelled due to technical problems.	4.16	4.31	4.01	4.78	3.87	4.44	4.41	3.96
The quality of technical support provided.	3.76	3.27	3.36	4.03	3.55	3.77	3.77	3.97
The overall usefulness of programme Websites.	3.64	3.60	4.42	4.40	4.08	5.05	3.88	4.80
Significant at: $\alpha=0.01$ (**), $\alpha=0.05$ (*)	**	**	*	**		**		

 Attribute with 1st or 2nd highest level of satisfaction.

 Attribute with lowest level of satisfaction.

in Table 5. For each of the programmes, the Friedman test was used to determine whether there were significant differences in student satisfaction with the attributes in this category. Student level of satisfaction varied significantly across the attributes in five of the programmes.

Satisfaction with the various attributes related to the use of technology varied across programmes. However, two attributes recorded the highest level of satisfaction in four programmes; the attributes were the degree of confidence in the reliability of technology used in class (Prog6, Prog8, Prog7, and Prog4), and the overall usefulness of programme Websites (Prog2, Prog8, Prog7, and Prog5).

With respect to the lowest level of satisfaction, students in different programmes were least satisfied with different attributes. However, 'the quality of technical support provided' recorded the lowest scores in three programmes (Prog6, Prog2, and Prog3).

Surprisingly, there were considerable differences in student satisfaction with the quality of the technology used in classes among programmes offered in technologically advanced countries. While students in programmes Prog1 and Prog6 offered in Hong Kong reported highest levels of satisfaction with this attribute, students in programmes Prog8 and Prog4, offered in an equally technologically advanced Singapore, were least satisfied with the quality of the technology used in classes in comparison with other technology-related attributes of their programmes.

### Student satisfaction with programme management and administration

The average ranked scores related to students' satisfaction with attributes in the Programme management and administration category are reported in Table 6. For each of the programmes, the Friedman test was used to determine whether there were significant differences in student satisfaction with the attributes in this category. Student level of satisfaction varied significantly across the attributes in four of the programmes.

Satisfaction with the various attributes related to programme management and administration varied across programmes. However, students in four programmes (Prog2, Prog8, Prog7, and Prog5) were highly satisfied with their ability to access the university programme coordinator when needed. Students in three programmes (Prog2, Prog3, and Prog7 - all offered in Malaysia) were also highly satisfied with their ability to access the university library and other student resources; yet, students in two other programmes, Prog1 in Hong Kong and Prog8 in Singapore, were least satisfied with this very attribute.

Among all the attributes related to programme management and administration, students in three programmes (Prog6, Prog7, and Prog5) rated lowest their 'ability to access a computer when, and if, needed'.

**Table 6: Student satisfaction with programme management and administration**

	University & local instructors				Local instructors only			
	Prog1 HK	Prog6 HK	Prog2 Mal	Prog8 Sin	Prog3 Mal	Prog7 Mal	Prog4 Sin	Prog5 Viet
The present means of exchanging programme material between you and the instructors.	6.26	6.53	5.74	5.97	6.13	6.06	6.10	5.96
Your ability to access the university library and other student resources.	5.13	5.38	7.40	4.26	7.28	6.76	6.02	6.23
Your ability to access a computer when, and if, needed.	6.20	4.89	6.74	6.26	5.94	5.40	6.24	4.33
The general attitude of the administrative/technical staff, e.g. in delivering materials, maintaining classrooms.	6.22	7.00	5.32	6.70	5.60	5.45	5.82	6.19
The accessibility of administrative/technical staff.	6.46	7.00	5.42	6.53	5.23	5.76	4.84	6.23
The promptness of delivery of programme materials.	5.88	6.28	5.66	6.42	6.31	5.55	5.99	6.83
Your ability to access the university programme coordinator when needed.	6.11	6.72	6.78	7.02	5.96	6.77	6.01	6.67
Class enrolment and registration procedures.	6.06	6.35	6.41	6.06	6.01	6.45	6.26	5.98
Your opportunity to evaluate the programme.	5.94	5.63	6.01	5.64	6.37	5.85	6.38	5.92
The extent to which, in your opinion, the university responds to evaluations.	5.62	5.03	5.17	5.05	5.46	5.69	6.11	5.63
The degree of organisational support.	6.12	5.19	5.35	6.08	5.71	6.24	6.23	6.02
Significant at: $\alpha=0.01$ (**), $\alpha=0.05$ (*)	**	**		**	**			

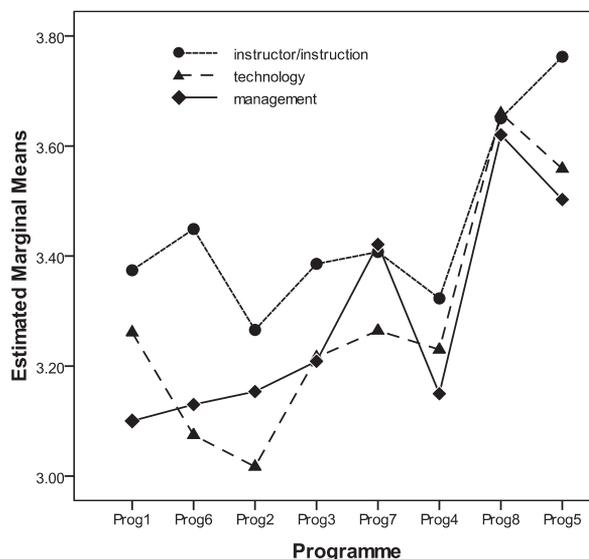
 Attribute with 1st or 2nd highest level of satisfaction.

 Attribute with lowest level of satisfaction.

### Comparative analysis of student satisfaction with the current programmes

It was important to determine if, and how, student satisfaction with the various aspects of their transnational programmes differed across all programmes. The two independent variables were: 'Programme' (with 8 levels: Prog1, Prog2, ..., and Prog8), and 'Category' (with 3 levels: Instructor/Instruction, Technology, and Programme management and administration). Each of the levels in the variable 'Category' represented a composite variable; for example, Instructor/Instruction represented the mean satisfaction of each student with all attributes related to instructor and instruction. Considering that 'Programme' was a between-subjects variable, and 'Category' was a within-subject variable, a mixed design ANOVA was used to test if there were significant differences in student satisfaction with the three aspects of transnational programmes across all programmes considered in this study.

A mixed design ANOVA showed a significant interaction between various aspects of the educational environ-



**Figure 1: Student satisfaction with current programmes, by category**

ment (Instructor/Instruction, Technology, and Programme management and administration) and the participating programmes,  $F(13.9, 812) = 4.33, p < .001$  (as illustrated in Figure 1). Students in programmes Prog8 and Prog5

**Table 7: Differences between the highest-ranking programmes**

	Prog8	Prog5
Infrastructure	Well-developed (Singapore)	Developing (Vietnam)
English proficiency	High	Limited
Mode of study (students)	Part-time	Full-time
Mode of teaching (instructors)	Both Australian & local	Local only
Australian institution	University4	University2

reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction than students in other programmes, with the exception of Prog7 where the difference was not significant.

Interestingly, programmes Prog8 and Prog5 differed in many respects, as illustrated in Table 7.

The students in Prog8 were almost equally satisfied with all three aspects of their programmes; on the other hand, students in Prog5 were most satisfied with their instructors and the quality of instruction and somewhat less satisfied with technology and programme management and administration.

Surprisingly, students in Prog4 which, like Prog8, was also delivered in Singapore and, like Prog5, was offered by University2, reported significantly lower levels of satisfaction than their counterparts in Prog8 and Prog5.

**Perceived programme effectiveness**

This section reports on student perceptions of programme effectiveness which was measured in three ways: one, students deemed their current programme effective/non-effective; two, students stated if they would be willing to participate in this type of programme (that is, transnational) in the future; and three, they stated if the programme was worthwhile – Table 8. The section cites student reasons for deeming their programmes effective/not effective, and worthwhile/not worthwhile (derived from the qualitative part of the student survey).

The majority of students in all programmes regarded their programmes as effective and worthwhile. Pro-

gramme structure and flexibility, and relevance to job and career were named as determining factors:

‘Flexibility of time and subject management.’ S8

‘I can work and study at the same time to earn a degree.’ S8

‘Provided a lot of useful knowledge that is required by recruiters.’ S5

‘It [the programme] provides proper materials in order for me to pursue a career in this field.’ S3

‘Useful in my job.’ S2

(S1 refers to a student in Prog1, S2 identifies a student in Prog2, and so on.)

Many students appreciated the opportunity to obtain a foreign degree without leaving their country or experience Western teaching methods:

‘Allows to study in a foreign country without leaving our country.’ S2

‘Gives the study opportunity for students who can’t study full time in Australia.’ S8

‘It eliminates the need to spend the entire course duration overseas which many cannot afford.’ S3

‘Because it applied Western teaching methods.’ S5

‘These types of programmes are better taught by the foreign university than the local uni.’ S2

‘I had the opportunity to learn new skills which I may not have in my home country.’ S3

Others valued the status of the Australian host university:

‘It is a highly accredited university.’ S8

‘Quality education from a recognised university is important.’ S8

‘Prestige.’ S5

‘Good university.’ S3

‘Good reputation.’ S7

**Table 8: Perceived effectiveness of current programmes (percentage of students who agreed)**

	University & local instructors				Local instructors only			
	Prog1 HK	Prog6 HK	Prog2 Mal	Prog8 Sin	Prog3 Mal	Prog7 Mal	Prog4 Sin	Prog5 Viet
Is the programme effective?	85	75	73	94	82	91	84	91
Would you participate in a similar programme again?	55	21	68	90	75	84	78	77
Is the programme worthwhile?	86	84	94	97	97	85	82	89

For some students, short programme duration leading to a formal qualification defined programme effectiveness:

'I can complete the programme in a short time.' S1

'Short.' S7

'It is quick and effective.' S1

'Fast to obtain a degree (express route).' S4

The approving assessment of the effectiveness of current programmes generally corresponded to the students' willingness to participate in a similar type of programme (that is, transnational) in the future; however, only 21 per cent of students in Prog6 declared their potential willingness. Those students in Prog6 who were not willing to participate often cited reasons that did not reflect on the quality of the programme or its type of delivery, but related to the students' lack of time, family circumstances, and financial constraints.

'I will use more time with my family and my work after I finish this course.'

'I will have a break after I finish this programme. I am very tired to study at night.'

'Very tired at night and working in daytime.'

'Too expensive.'

Other students in this programme cited disappointment with the demanding programme schedule, frequent and unexpected schedule changes, lack of adequate course material and support, and emphasis on self-study as reasons for not trusting similar types of programmes in the future.

'Schedule too tight. Not enough time provided for good preparation in the study period.'

'Too much to study, too many topics, no time for revision; not easy to get a high mark.'

'I don't have time to ask comments, suggestions from the professor face to face.'

'Not enough materials or demo to make it easier for the students.'

'The schedule is too condensed, 4 times a week, which is very difficult to fit in daily work and the schedule is changed quite often.'

## Conclusion

Student perspectives outlined in this article were collected with the notion in mind that as the ultimate clients of an education programme, students should participate

in defining what constitutes its effectiveness. The reported findings might assist academics, designers, and administrators involved in teaching, developing, and managing such programmes to gain insights into programme effectiveness as perceived by transnational students.

- Satisfaction with instructors in the evaluated programmes was high; however, in the four programmes taught by both University and local instructors, students reported higher levels of satisfaction with University instructors in terms of overall satisfaction and the instructors' teaching ability; in two programmes, the differences were statistically significant.
- Slow feedback on assessment tasks emerged as a major problem in all evaluated programmes. Students identified the tardiness with which tests and written assignments were marked and returned as the least satisfactory aspect associated with instructors and instruction.
- Students were highly satisfied with the reliability of technology used in class and the overall usefulness of programme Web sites. On the other hand, the quality of the available technical support was found to be lacking.
- The majority of students regarded their programmes as effective and worthwhile. Students named the following determinants of programme effectiveness: programme structure and flexibility, relevance to job and career, opportunity to obtain a foreign degree without leaving their country, opportunity to experience Western teaching methods, high status of Australian Universities, and short programme duration leading to a formal qualification.

In terms of assisting in the design, development, and review of transnational programmes, the findings presented in this article could be pertinent to staff involved in those programmes, as well as to university administrators. For staff, they could provide a platform for reflection on what is 'right' or 'wrong' with a programme, and which practices are effective or non-effective. Understanding of how the learning experience discourages or frustrates learners might enable staff to consider and implement constructive changes. For instance, the reported perceived failure of the programmes to deliver timely feedback on assignments identifies one aspect of the programmes that calls for attention.

For university administrators, the reported findings could provide assistance in reviewing the quality and consistency of their transnational offerings. For instance, it has been argued that transnational programmes should be of equivalent standard to the same programmes offered by the university at home, and various university quality

policies include that requirement. Yet, the reported findings revealed significant differences between perceived performance of university and local lecturers in the participating programmes, which might undermine the requirement of equivalent programme standards; this is one issue for university administrators to consider. Likewise, university policies and, in some instances, dedicated university units aim to ensure that all transnational education programmes offered under the university are delivering a sound education consistent and compliant with well defined standards. Yet, the reported study revealed significant differences between perceived satisfaction with two programmes offered by the same university, potentially challenging the requirement of intra-institutional consistency of transnational programmes; this is another issue for the university administrators to address.

Given the information contained in this article, it is evident that to improve and sustain transnational programmes in the future, it is essential for universities to gain an understanding of the learners' perspective: an understanding that transcends attendance records and academic achievements.

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