

Education Services Go to Market

by Gavan Bromilow and John Zubrzycki

AS communications and travel speed up and the world shrinks, Australia is much, much closer to the global marketplace and is finding new products and services to sell at the right price.

One such service being packaged to go on the made-in-Australia shelves, with staples like wool, wheat, iron ore and coal, is education. And the market demand is so strong and the packaging apparently so attractive that an Australian education is finding a favoured position among the speciality brands.

In 1989, there were more than 53,000 overseas students in Australia, more than double the 1987 total. Foreign exchange earnings for the same period rose from \$100 million to \$240 million.

There would appear to be three major reasons for the sharp increase.

The first is the Australian Government's policy of encouraging greater use of the Australian education system by students from overseas.

Second, universities and other educational institutions are actively recruiting students from abroad.

And the third is that students and their parents overseas, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, know Australia has educational services comparable with the best in the world at competitive fee costs.

The cost, for example, of a three-year degree in computer science at an Australian university is roughly \$11,000 a year with living expenses of \$8,000 to \$11,000 a year.

But there are other important factors which overseas students find attractive too. Australia has a stable political environment, a secure, relaxed society relatively free of racial tensions, and varied lifestyles for people who like the lively cultural life of the cities as well as the space and solitude of the Australian countryside.

Education is not an entirely new product on the export shelf — Australia welcomed its first overseas students in 1904, the majority of them from Asia. It was not until the Colombo Plan of the 1950s that Australia began offering education and training to large numbers of overseas students.

More than 200,000 overseas students have studied in Australia since the 1950s. Those numbers soon will seem small compared with the upsurge now taking place. The number of English language intensive course students, for example, increased from 5663 in 1987 to 21,210 in 1989.

In the past, education for overseas students was tied largely to the Australian development assistance programme. Study for the majority was free or at least heavily subsidised.

Today, because of changed perceptions in Australia and the improved economic position of larger segments of the

Asian communities, Australian education services are moving to a user-pays system for all students, Australian and overseas.

As part of this new concept, the Australian Trade Commission (Austrade), is involved in marketing education services in Asia and elsewhere.

The manager of Austrade's education and Training Unit, Ms Kate Critchley, said it sought to promote Australian education and training services as an alternative to the traditional sources of those services, such as the US, Britain, Western Europe and Canada.

"Many people overseas are beginning to realise that Australia, because of its particular environmental and climatic conditions and its technological and scientific levels, has developed areas and institutions of expertise which are very relevant to a wide range of other countries," Ms Critchley said.

"For example, Queensland has expertise in tropical studies, including aspects of medicine, agriculture and horticulture, oceanography and marine biology. These are useful to most other tropical countries, Cumberland College in Sydney has the capacity to train nurses across a full range of bush medicine. This is useful to any country, tropical or otherwise, which has isolated communities."

Western Australia and South Australia specialised in dryland farming techniques which were of particular interest to Middle East and African countries: New South Wales and South Australia had expertise in grape growing and wine making.

Victoria and New South Wales had expertise in animal genetics. Tasmania, in recent years, had developed programmes in aquaculture and, in addition, had the Australian Maritime College.

South Australia had developed a science degree course especially for pilots and Tasmania had a highly developed capacity to train air traffic controllers.

"All States can offer courses at a high level by world standards in such fields as mining engineering, computer science, sports medicine, sports psychology, and the training of sporting coaches, teachers and administrators," Ms Critchley said.

She also pointed out that degrees awarded by Australian universities and colleges of advanced education were generally recognised in Britain and the US. Graduates with first or second class honours gain ready access to post-graduate programmes in the most prestigious American and British universities.

Ms Critchley said that, while Australia had a great deal

to offer students from all parts of the world, there had been some bad publicity recently about educational institutions failing and leaving students stranded.

Some establishments which have given the impression of being more interested in getting their hands on students' fees than anything else also have emerged and tarnished Australia's image.

The Australian Government, in cooperation with the various State governments, has moved quickly to ensure that the credentials of institutions offering courses to students are assessed by recognised professional authorities and that the institutions are operating properly.

Under the system, state governments will have responsibility for accreditation and monitoring with the advice of the Australian Council of Independent Business Colleges and other professional organisations," Ms Banikoff said.

"In addition, all educational institutions in Australia now must guarantee a refund of fees or a transfer to another course or institution if they collapse."

Professor Patricia Denham, Head of the Centre for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), at the University of Canberra, which has been teaching English as a second language for 22 years, says there are important intangibles in providing courses for overseas

students. It also takes students off campus for two afternoons a week to visit theatres, museums, galleries and other places of public interest to experience the language in a non-classroom setting.

The reasons students give for choosing to study in Australia vary considerably, but they tend to emphasise the growing international reputation of Australian education, closeness to their home countries — if they come from Asia or the Pacific — and the relative cheapness of Australian courses compared with costs in other western countries.

Ms Hesti Rossiana Sulistawati, 24, from Surabaya in Java, did a short-term intensive English course at the University of Canberra in early 1990, as a preliminary to a masters degree in Public

Administration at the University, had friends in Thailand who had studied in the US and they urged him to study there.

"I chose Australia because I believed the Australian people would be friendly, that Australia has a stable political environment, it is cheaper to study here and closer to my home in Bangkok," he said. Mr Mana is accompanied by his wife, Songnam, who is studying English and will go on to a one-year master's degree in Nursing. They are private, full-fee paying students being financed by their families.

The Australian Government knows that if it is to attract many more students from overseas it must have good information services and efficient processing of student applicants. To achieve this, it has begun setting up Student Education Centres throughout Asia.

In March, centres began operating in Singapore, Bangkok, Jakarta, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur and Taipei. Others will follow in Seoul, Tokyo and in the People's Republic of China.

Professor Ken Back, executive director of the International Development Programme of Australian Universities and Colleges (IDP), said in February 1990: "These centres have been set up at the request of the Australian Government by IDP in association with the Australian airline, Qantas."

With the changeover to a user-pays system for local and overseas students, the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau is modifying its extensive scholarship and fee-subsidising schemes, replacing them with the Equity and Merit Scholarship Scheme (EMSS).

Equity scholarship will be given to students of academic ability who do not have the same economic and social advantages as other.

Merit scholarships will be given to students of exceptional academic merit from any sector of their community more than 20 countries, mostly in the Asia-Pacific region, will receive about 600 scholarships in 1990. The scholarships will cover full fees, fares to and from Australia as well as providing a living allowance.

As the old subsidy scheme is phased out and the new EMSS is introduced, the number of scholarships is expected to rise to about 200 in 1992-93 at a cost of about \$40 million. The old subsidised scheme will cost about \$57 million this financial year, dropping to only \$7.18 million in 1992-93. — (Australia Now)

Agriculture Colleges Need Autonomy

by M Zahidul Haque

NOW there are three agriculture colleges in Bangladesh. These are: Bangladesh Agricultural Institute (BAI) also known as Bangladesh Agricultural College, Dhaka, Hajj Md Danesh Agriculture College, Dinaipur and Patuakhali Agriculture College, Patuakhali.

Bangladesh Agriculture Institute is the oldest agricultural education institution of this sub-continent. It was founded by the great leader Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazul Haq in 1938. In the beginning, BAI was treated as an independent agricultural faculty of Dhaka University. Now the BAI and other two colleges are functioning under dual administration.

On December 12, 1989 the government conceded to the demand that Bangladesh Agricultural College would be made autonomous.

Looking under dual administration, i.e. administrative side is looked after by Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI), Gazipur while academic activities are controlled by Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), Mymensingh. As a result of the dual administration, agricultural colleges are facing tremendous problems in functioning as ideal educational institutions.

It is known to everyone that the Head of the previous government on December 12, 1989 announced in BAI's golden jubilee function that Bangladesh Agricultural College would be given autonomy in the pattern of BITs with a view to solving its long-standing academic and administrative problems. Since then the process of providing autonomy to BAI is going on. Everyone including experts, bureaucrats agreed upon one point that only full autonomy could solve the problems of BAI and other two agricultural colleges. This decision was approved by the highest bodies of the government. A few high powered committees were formed to work on the implementation of autonomy to BAI and other two colleges.

During this time, the teachers of BAI prepared a draft ordinance in the light of BIT's ordinance and submitted it to various committees including the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA). The Director General of BARI and Principal BAI attended the meeting of the inter-ministerial committee for autonomy. But unfortunately, in these meetings the sentiments of the teachers and students of BAI as well as of HMDAC and PKC were not properly re-

flected, because there were no teachers' representative. The Principal alone tried his best to record the interests of the agricultural colleges in the light of the national requirements and benefits.

Recently the MOA, ignoring teachers' representation formed an 'Education Cell' and ordered DC, BARI to put the entire management of the agricultural colleges under the disposal of this cell.

On May 11, the MOA invited the teachers' and students' representative to a dialogue. In this meeting, the Secretary, MOA after listening to the problems of the teachers and students agreed to suspend the order pertaining to the formation of 'Krishi Shiksha Cell', while teacher and students' representatives placed their proposal to providing autonomy to the agriculture colleges through ordinance in the pattern of BIT. As a first step, they urged the MOA to form a management committee (MC) which will be responsible for preparing the ordinance and an interim management of the three colleges.

It may be mentioned here that previously the MOA had constituted such a management committee headed by Secretary. The functions of MC as contained in the memo under reference are as below:

1. The MC shall exercise general supervision over the affairs of the Institute.
2. The MC shall approve the course of studies, enrolment of students, research programmes and other related activities of IPSA.
3. The MC shall establish general policies and procedures for the recruitment of the faculty members and other staff of the Institute.
4. The MC shall prepare and submit to the Ministry of Agril. and other Government bodies and other concerned agencies budgets, annual reports/interim reports, position papers, etc. as and when required.
5. The MC shall cease to function as soon as an Act or Ordinance is prepared and approved by the Government making it a fully autonomous organization.

Now there is the instance of IPSA and it is felt that the MOA can sanction autonomy to the country's three agriculture colleges including the BAI by constituting a management committee (MC). This MC shall look after the management of all the colleges till an Act or Ordinance is prepared and approved by the government making these colleges as fully autonomous institutions.



Students from the Asia-Pacific region at the University of Canberra undertake a wide selection of courses. — Photo: Michael Jensen

Ms Alexia Banikoff, the acting head of the Overseas Student Programmes Branch of the Department of Employment, Education and Training, confirms that her department recently has improved introduced systems to ensure good professional and administrative standards are practised by all educational institutions offering courses to overseas students.

She said one change, introduced from the beginning of 1990, had private establishments teaching English language intensive courses being checked and accredited by the Professional body of English language teachers.

"A similar national accreditation model for independent business colleges has been operating since last year.

Our own surveys have shown that students learn about our courses mainly by word of mouth and that they come to Australia on the recommendation of friends and family.

It is important to the continued well-being of Australian education services that overseas students go away not only with a better understanding of Australia, but also with a favourable impression.

The university provides TESOL-course students with the opportunity to learn about a wide cross-section of Australian lifestyles. The university has its own permanent bush camp at Jervis Bay, on the New South Wales coast and takes students there for three-day visits.

Making College Education Meaningful

by Tahmina Begum and Helal Uddin Ahmed

FOR many centuries civilized societies have looked to their institutions of higher learning for the training and grooming up of professionals and government leaders. Growth and diversification of technology and the accompanying complexity of the social structure are fast increasing and this necessitates an increase in range and number of positions for which higher education which includes college education, is essential.

This college education in the modern world has to provide training in a larger number of disciplines to a greater number of pupils. As a society develops, the need for college education increases. But college education not only has to groom an adequate number of people to fill positions appropriate to modern conditions, it must also cater to the qualitative aspect of its outputs.

Higher education has a responsibility — which goes beyond the preparing of people to get specialised or professional jobs. It must also assist them to become educated in a general sense.

This means inculcating in them a proper habit of work, a continuing desire for knowledge, a sustained initiative, an independence of thought and action, an understanding of the problems of society, a desire to help solve such problems, and a sense of honesty and fairplay in dealing with others in the community.

Furthermore, an effective system of higher education not only serves society's present needs. It also helps in giving direction and impetus to the course of human progress and civilization. It is the agency primarily responsible for extending the frontiers of human knowledge, to examine, interpret and improve the condition of man and nature.

Since independence, education at the higher levels in Bangladesh has expanded enormously. New colleges have been opened or affiliated and existing ones expanded with adequate facilities.

Expansion has been at the expense of quality which has undergone disastrous deterioration. To ensure our future progress and to uphold the cause of national uplift it is imperative that this trend be reversed.

In college or higher education there are three distinct stages of scholarly activity as represented by the undergraduate, the early post-graduate, and the advanced post-graduate stage of education, distinct from primary and secondary stages.

The structure of secondary education in our country follows a 3+2+2 pattern. It was given this shape as in the Calcutta University Commission (Saddler's Commission) Report in 1917. According to this commission the standard of education was dependent on the quality of secondary education. Consequently, a 2-

year intermediate course was introduced between the secondary and the university level.

The main objective of this 2-year course was to prepare the students for higher education.

The first introduces the student to a field of specialisation, the second — master of a portion of that field, and the third — inroads into advanced areas through independent study and research.

Theoretically, college education may be defined as the form of education that exists for the advanced training of pupils who have had at least twelve years of schooling, who have a proven capacity for intellectual pursuits, and who would eventually serve as professionals at various levels.

The essence of college education is a community of scholarship in which the student is working for the first time in relative independence. It follows, therefore, that college education must be conceived of and administered as a separate

entity according to their merit. But by keeping this course open for everybody irrespective of merit, its inherent justification has been violated in our country and it has become a mere passport for higher education unrelated to national needs and unresponsive to socio-economic realities.

As a consequence, the standard of our college education has slumped, and there had been a massive increase in the number of educated unemployed.

In this context it may be mentioned that the Bangladesh National Education Commission headed by Mafizuddin Ahmed recommended in 1988 that the higher secondary or intermediate classes (XI and XII) should be gradually incorporated within the High Schools.

At the same time, those colleges which presently offer only H S C level courses should also offer S S C courses. Presently there are 365 Intermediate Colleges and all these can be converted into secondary and higher secondary institutions.

If the responsibility of H S C level education is vested on the High Schools, the colleges can then concentrate fully on undergraduate and graduate levels.

This concentrated effort would raise the standard of college education and also improve the standard of teaching in colleges.

The traditional 2-year Degree pass courses of our colleges do not offer the opportunity

for adequate learning of various disciplines. Although the student gets a certificate, this does not prove much of a help in his chosen profession.

Considering this, our neighbouring countries were prompted to adopt 3-year degree courses. Many other countries of the globe have similar arrangements as shown in table two.

Even in our country, undergraduate courses in Medicine take 5 years, and courses on engineering and agriculture take 4 years. There is no reason to believe that the courses on science, social science, commerce and arts are less important than medicine, engineering or agriculture.

The percentage of success at undergraduate Honours level in our country is almost 100%. As against this, only around 30% make their way through the Degree-Pass programme.

Currently there is a tendency to ignore or underrate the subsidiary subjects, and even students with very poor marks in these subjects sometimes top the undergraduate Honours list by virtue of their performance in Honours subject alone.

Considering all these factors, the national education commission (1988) has recommended a single pattern 3-year undergraduate course for science, arts, social science and commerce, instead of the existing dual pattern.

Consequently, a huge amount of national resource is wasted for educating the failures. This waste could have been reduced if a proper method was devised for filtering the upward movement of students on the basis of merit and financial need.

The main reason why Degree-Pass students find it difficult to scrape through is because they are given insufficient time to grasp all three subjects. Even those who pass face discriminatory treatment in higher education and jobs; this is due to the generally held view that the standard of Degree-Pass education is very poor.

Overlapping Commitments of Further Education

IN many social and economic sectors a structural change is taking place not only in the new Bundeslander but the Federal Republic of Germany as a whole (eg coal, energy, environment) — a change which is leading to a reorientation in all areas of further education and training. Quite a few industrial and commercial sectors are in a state of flux; new requirements at one's work-place are demanding a faster and faster readjustment of employees.

A substantial number of unemployed persons are not used to learning and require special qualification measures. Nowadays, further education and training must provide both job-oriented qualifications as well as adequate advice on how to come to terms with changed personal and social conditions in a purposeful manner. In this context, the dividing lines between general and vocational further education are often fluid.

The traditional separation of place of learning from place of work disappears. General qualifications such as mastering foreign languages, improving one's ability to communicate or to think coherently are gaining in importance in one's job.

Conversely, vocational qualifications, such as the ability to solve problems or knowing how to orientate oneself can frequently be applied in the private sphere, too. The principal objectives in this process are "learning how to learn" and how to cope with complicated situations.

The promotion of a willingness among the general public to partake in further education is a basic requirement for the effectiveness of qualification programmes.

Experience shows that those areas of the population which are willing to be educated anyway, will also continue to do so in the future, whereas there are considerable difficulties in trying to win

over persons who are not used to learning or who are slow learners to the idea of systematic further education.

They are in need of special help which will promote their readiness to learn. Coping with the economic structural changes in the ex-GDR represents the greatest challenge in the years ahead.

Following the political changes in the eastern part of Germany and in Eastern Europe, in 1989 alone, half a million former GDR citizens and over 800,000 ethnic immigrants flocked into the German employment market. Their vocational and social integration are making heavy demands on further education.

Since more and more women are going out to work and the number of women re-

turning to work after breaking off their career for family reasons is increasing, the importance and need of vocational further education and training for women have grown quite considerably.

In this connection, apart from the updating and improvement of professional qualifications. It is also a matter of opening up new occupational areas for women returning to work and, in particular, providing support for personal and professional reorientation by means of better structural conditions, such as child-care, for instance.

The Federal Government and the Lander have initiated a large number of pilot schemes in this area to provide women with fairer opportunities.

— IN Press

Level/Type	1985 (June)		1990 (June)	
	No. of college	Enrolment	No. of college	Enrolment
Intermediate College	205	86,048	365	1,55,052
Degree College	403	4,10,155	472	7,47,426
TOTAL	608	4,96,203	837	9,02,478

Source: The Fourth Five Year Plan; Planning Commission.
Note: In Bangladesh 472 colleges impart education at degree level (1990). Amongst these 43 colleges offer undergraduate Honours course and 12 colleges offer Masters degree courses.

Country	Duration
India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Australia, Japan	3 years
United Kingdom	3 1/4 years
Indonesia, South Korea, Thailand, Philippines, USA	4 years
China	4 1/2 years
Countries belonging to former Soviet Union	5/6 years

Source: Education Commission Report, 1988.

