

HONG KONG STUDENTS AND THE EXPANSION OF AUSTRALIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

■ Ian Dobson

Between 1989 and 1992, the numbers of overseas students in Australian higher education increased by 61 per cent, from 12,840 to 33,850. This rapid increase occurred during a time of general growth in the size of the higher education sector in Australia. Therefore, spectacular as the increase in overseas numbers has been, their proportion of all enrolments in the sector as a whole has only moved from 4.8 per cent to 6.1 per cent.¹

Undergraduate enrolments represent the largest proportion of the total for both overseas and local students. Over the period in question, the

proportion of local undergraduates declined from 84.5 per cent to 81.7 percent, compensated by increases of local higher degree by research and other postgraduate enrolments. For overseas students, the proportion of undergraduates increased, as did the proportion of other postgraduates. The proportion of higher degree by research enrolments by overseas students declined, in contrast to the conventional impressions often aired on the matter, particularly concerning science and technology research.

The country contributing the most to the expansion of overseas numbers was Hong Kong. Table 1 summarises some of the more obvious trends:

Table 1: Higher Education Enrolments: Total students and Hong Kong-born overseas students

	1989	1992	Increase	
			No.	%
Total students	441076	559365	118289	26.8
Local students	420066	525515	105449	25.1
Overseas students	21010	33850	12840	61.1
Hong Kong overseas students	2486	7001	4515	181.6
Undergraduate	2244	6601	4357	194.2
Higher degree by research	69	50	-19	-27.5
Other postgraduate research	173	350	177	102.3
Field of study				
Business	1236	3542	2306	186.6
Engineering	253	665	412	162.8
Health	311	906	595	191.3
Science	389	1081	692	177.9
Other fields of study	297	807	510	171.7
Hong Kong female students	1106	3401	2295	207.5
All overseas females	7918	14431	6513	82.3
% of all female overseas	14.0	23.6		

Source: Dept of Employment, Education & Training, student data, unpublished.

The number of Hong Kong overseas students increased by 4,515, or 181.6 per cent, from 2,486 in 1989 to 7,001 enrolments in 1992. Hong Kong remains the second largest supplier of overseas students, but the gap between it and the largest supplier (Malaysia), has narrowed considerably. Hong Kong's proportion of all overseas students increased from 12 per cent to 21 per cent. Hong Kong supplied over 35 per cent of the increase in overseas student enrolments. Trends suggest that the growth of numbers of Hong Kong students will continue into the future, since the growth in commencing students is very high also, having increased by 140 per cent since 1989.

The largest growth in enrolments occurred in the Business/Administration/Economics field of study, which increased by 2,306, or 186.6 per cent. Between 1989 and 1992, the proportion of Hong Kong students in these courses increased from about 16 per cent of all overseas business students to nearly 25 per cent.

Female overseas students from Hong Kong have always been represented in greater numbers than female students from most other countries. Their proportion of all female overseas students increased from 14 per cent to nearly 24 per cent, at the same time as showing an overall growth rate of over 207 per cent. Growth of female overseas students overall was rather more modest, at 82 per cent.

The figures discussed above relate to overseas students. By definition, an overseas student is one who is not one of the following:

- * an Australian citizen;
- * a citizen of New Zealand; or
- * the holder of a permanent entry permit.²

Since the start of 1990, overseas students have been admitted to

Australian higher education on a full fee-paying basis only, where fees must cover the cost of tuition plus a capital component. Therefore, most of the students enumerated above are paying full fees of between \$9,000 and \$24,000 for their courses. The few students remaining from the time of the previous policy on overseas students (last intake was in 1989), are paying fees equivalent to about 45 per cent of their tuition.

A further examination of the aggregated data sets provided by the Department of Employment Education and Training reveals a much greater impact on Australian higher education by Hong Kong-born students than is evident from examining only overseas students. Table 2 summarises their distribution:

Table 2: Hong Kong-born students in Australian higher education, 1992

	No.	%
Overseas students	7135	51.1
Home residence		
Hong Kong	7001	50.1
Elsewhere overseas	134	1.0
Non-overseas students	6833	48.9
Home residence		
Australia	6380	45.7
Overseas	453	3.2
Total	13968	100

Source: Dept of Employment, Education & Training, student data, unpublished.

A total of 13,968 students in Australian higher education institutions were born in Hong Kong. Of these, 7,135 were overseas students, and 7,001 of those indicated a home residence of Hong Kong. Any of these students commencing in 1990 or after were required to pay full fees for tuition.

Therefore, only slightly more than half of the number of Hong Kong

students are overseas students. If this pattern is mirrored by other foreign-born students, it could help to explain the exaggerations about numbers of overseas students in higher education.

Of the remaining non-overseas students born in Hong Kong, 6,380 declared a home residence in Australia, including 1,094 who had arrived since 1990. This leaves 453 Hong Kong born students holding citizenship or

permanent entry status, who have a home residence outside Australia.

References

- ¹ Ian Dobson 'Trends in Enrolments of Overseas Students in Higher Education', *People and Place*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1993, p. 39-45.
- ² Department of Employment Education & Training Higher Education Student Data Collection: Main Documentation, 1988, p. 132.

IS THERE A BRAIN DRAIN? THE CASE OF ENGINEERS

■ T. Fred Smith

Earlier studies including that by Pure¹ in 1988 revealed a net inflow into Australia of scientists and engineers as a result of immigration. A study conducted in 1992 by Birrell *et al.*⁴ highlighted the continuing influx of professionals, in particular engineers, in spite of the very restricted job market.

However recent publicity given by the media to the departure from Australia of highly-skilled professionals has given rise to concerns that the net inflow of professionals has reversed to produce a possible 'brain drain'.

Other recent studies^{2,3} of the future workforce demand in Australia for scientists and engineers have argued the need for a continued inflow of overseas professionals to meet a projected shortage by the year 2000. Such long-term projections do not address the question of the short-term impact of the current recession on the entry and exit of scientists and engineers.

It is the intent of this paper to use Bureau of Immigration and Population Research (BIPR) unpublished research statistics to review the evidence for the migration of engineers.

THE MIGRATION PATTERN OF ENGINEERS

In addressing the question of whether there is a brain drain of engineers it has been decided to focus on the movement of permanent and long-term residents. The movement of engineers who define their departure as 'short term' may be important. However, because the data in these movements by occupation are based on a sample, the BIPR believes they are insufficiently reliable for analysis.

Figure 1 presents the data on the arrival and departure of engineers between 1983-84 and 1991-92. There are several points to be noted:

- i) There has been growth in the incoming and outgoing traffic.
- ii) There has been a net influx throughout the period that has