

2. Australia–Latin America Education Relations

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One of the main challenges in building a solid relationship between Australia and Latin America is finding an area of convergence. The distances between the two areas are vast, the linguistic barriers significant, and the level of mutual knowledge and understanding small. At first blush matters are further complicated when attention is turned to economic questions, with Latin America and Australia appearing more as competitors than complementary actors in international natural resource and agricultural commodity markets. Bilateral flows of trade in goods are correspondingly small, further hampered by the logistical difficulties of travelling between the geographic areas by air or sea. The one sector that stands out as a potential champion of bilateral exchange is education, with Australia serving as an important destination for Latin Americans seeking formal qualifications and English language training.

The export of educational services is big business,¹ and particularly so for Australia.² In 2011–12 education was the country's third largest export sector, with over 515,000 students in 2012 bringing in \$14.768 billion in revenue, down from \$17.35 billion in 2009–10, and supporting over 125,000 jobs. Moreover, the government of Australia is clear that foreign students studying in Australia provide additional boons in the form of enriching the cultural context of Australian educational institutions and providing a pool of casual labour for the service industry.³ Australia's decidedly commercial approach to the educational sector consequently holds mixed blessings for the deepening of inter-continental relations with Latin America. There is a demand in Latin America for access to higher education, vocational educational training (VET) and English language training (ELICOS), and Australia is viewed as an amenable destination or source for such activities. The issue is that educational relations

1 Simon Marginson, 'Dynamics of National and Global Competition in Higher Education', *Higher Education* 52, 2006: pp. 1–39; Philip G. Altbach and Jane Knight, 'The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities', *Journal of Studies in International Education* 11, 2007, (3/4): pp. 290–305; Rajani Naidoo, 'Repositioning Higher Education as a Global Commodity: Opportunities and Challenges for Future Sociology of Education Work', *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 24, 2003, (2): pp. 249–59.

2 Simon Marginson and Erlenawati Sawir, 'University Leaders' Strategies in the Global Environment: A Comparative Study of Universities Indonesia and The Australian National University', *Higher Education* 52, 2006: pp. 343–73.

3 Brendan Nelson, *Engaging the World through Education: Ministerial Statement on the Internationalisation of Australian Education and Training* (Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training, Australian Government, 2003); Council of Australian Governments, *International Student Strategy for Australia, 2010–2014* (2010), http://www.coag.gov.au/reports/docs/aus_international_students_strategy.pdf: p. 5.

are currently framed and largely pursued as an implicit service provision arrangement, not as a partnership that sees a sustained and substantive flow of Australians heading to Latin America for educational training and collaborative research. As a consequence, education in its current form is a relatively shallow device for raising mutual awareness. If this form of educational relations persists, the existing Australian beachhead in Latin America might easily be lost should other OECD countries emerge as cost-effective, quality alternatives. Indeed, this is a concern that preoccupies the government of Australia and has resulted in a series of reviews and strategies, most recently with the release of the *International Student Strategy for Australia, 2010–2014* that has sought to improve quality assurance and boost international marketing strategies. Such initiatives are necessary, particularly when attention is turned to the explicit efforts by countries such as the UK to use foreign student fees as an anchor to maintain national university systems that are being heavily impacted by post-Global Financial Crisis budget cuts.⁴ Moreover, recent declines in education export earnings from 2009–13 suggest that the Australian government should be concerned about declining global market share and the core attractiveness of the Australian brand.

This chapter will focus on the nature of Australia–Latin America educational relations. Attention will first be turned to the factors underpinning trade in educational services as well as academic exchange, pointing to two different sets of motivations. For Australia, the driving factors are a combination of explicit attempts to boost national export income from services and attempts to develop some measure of soft power connection with Latin America. The corresponding push from Latin America is more focused on development priorities, concentrating on the acquisition of the skills and knowledge necessary to grow national economies sustainably and exploit international opportunities. Overarching these different motivations are transnational economic pressures, particularly from the resource extraction industries that dominate both regions. The second section of the chapter will map out the results, tracing the changing levels of Australian educational exports. Finally, the third section will explore the challenges and opportunities in the Australia–Latin America educational relationship.

4 Daniel Boffey, 'British bid to attract 10,000 Brazilian students', *The Observer*, 10 July 2011.

Latin American recruitment

As noted above, trade in educational services is big business and Latin America is a growing market for Australia.⁵ The export of Australian educational services to the region has surged over the last decade, rising from \$155 million in 2002–03 to a high of \$824 million in 2009–10, and then down to a post-GFC level of \$755 million in 2011–2012. As Table 2.1 sets out, growth in Australia’s Latin American income far outpaces the global rate, which rose from \$6.6 billion in 2002–3 to \$18.5 billion in 2009–10, before fading to \$14.7 billion in 2011–12. While the Latin American share in the overall Australian educational export totals remains comparatively small, it has grown from 2.3 per cent at the beginning of the period to 5.1 per cent at the end. This growth is not accidental, reflecting a conscious push by private firms, universities and the Australian government to recruit more students from the region.

Over the last quarter-century the Australian government has become increasingly aware that educational services are an important part of the country’s export picture, and one that could be grown with judicious policy assistance. In his October 2003 policy statement ‘Engaging the World through Education’, then Minister for Education, Science and Training Brendan Nelson mapped out an internationally engaged vision for the Australian education sector.⁶ In what was to become the model for future policies, Nelson emphasised two crucial priorities within the government’s larger plans. First, a great deal of emphasis was placed on ensuring the quality of Australian education, strengthening the regulatory and oversight frameworks necessary to ensure that the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) would be internationally respected as a benchmark for quality academic and vocational training.⁷ Second, resources were channelled into the international arm of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), Australia Education International (AEI), to work with Austrade not only to promote greater student numbers, but also to encourage market diversification. Of particular relevance for this chapter was the 2003–04 Commonwealth Budget funding provision for Latin American offices—first in Chile (2004) and then in Brazil (2005) after a visit by Minister Nelson—managed by an Australian-based diplomat.⁸

5 In this paper the Reserve Bank of Australia’s definition of educational services is used: ‘Exports of education services can be delivered either offshore (by the internet, correspondence or Australian professionals travelling overseas) or onshore (by foreign students entering Australia for the purpose of study).’ <http://www.rba.gov.au/publications/bulletin/2008/jun/pdf/bu-0608-2.pdf>.

6 Brendan Nelson, *Engaging the World through Education*, *op. cit.*, note 3.

7 Ann Doolette, ‘Australian Qualifications Framework’, Powerpoint Presentation to the 2010 COALAR–EAG Roundtable, Canberra, 10 September 2010.

8 Wendy Katherine Jarvie, ‘Latin America: Opportunities and Risks in Education’, *Global Education News, Australia*, 13 April 2011: www.austrade.gov.au/export_markets/industries/education/enewsletter.

Table 2.1: Australian educational services exports (\$ millions)

Countries	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Argentina	5	4	4	4	5	6	6	8	8	8
Bolivia	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
Brazil	74	81	111	175	234	311	414	401	331	318
Chile	3	5	6	10	18	25	38	51	52	60
Colombia	48	43	40	55	100	168	242	277	227	232
Cuba	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Ecuador	1	2	2	2	3	3	4	5	5	6
El Salvador	-	-	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	3
Guatemala	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
Mexico	15	20	25	26	33	38	39	42	41	42
Panama	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	1
Paraguay	-	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	-
Peru	3	4	6	11	22	40	60	71	59	50
Uruguay	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Venezuela	5	4	4	4	5	8	13	20	28	32
Latin Am total (\$m)	155	165	202	290	423	603	824	883	758	755
Global total (\$m)	6,638	7,767	8,743	9,745	11,109	13,536	16,735	18,507	15,510	14,768
Latin Am % of world	2.3	2.1	2.3	3.0	3.8	4.5	4.9	4.8	4.9	5.1

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *International Trade in Services, by Country, by State and by Detailed Services Category, Financial Year, 2011-12* (ABS Catalogue no. 5368.0.55.003): Table 9.4.

The work being undertaken by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and AEI was paralleled by a more general sense that the Americas should probably be receiving more attention from policy-makers. A central coordinating mechanism for Australia's push to increase engagement with Latin America is the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Council on Australia Latin America Relations (COALAR), which was formed in 2001. One of the outcomes of a March 2003 COALAR-funded education symposium was the decision to launch the Council's Education Action Group (COALAR-EAG) and provide seed funding for a research project by Australia Education International that sought to identify opportunities for the export of educational services to Latin America.⁹ This reflected the general pattern of cooperation that would emerge between DEST and its successor ministry, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The marketing of Australian educational opportunities would be chiefly driven by a blend of AEI, DEST/DEEWR and Austrade, while the COALAR-EAG would focus its efforts on facilitating and funding fact-finding missions and exchanges to strengthen inter-institutional links. A succession of visits built upon this institutional framework, with senior delegations from Australia travelling to Mexico and Chile to highlight Australian expertise and gain an understanding of the requirements of those two countries. A reciprocal visit from Mexican Minister of Education Dr Reyes S. Tamez Guerra resulted in Australia being listed as a priority destination for Mexican study abroad schemes.¹⁰

One of the benefits that COALAR brought to the education file was its ability to arrange crosswalks between different areas. Of particular note were the efforts in 2004–05 to start exploring opportunities for the provision of vocational and professional training in the mining and mineral industry by promoting the possibilities inherent in the Australian Qualifications Framework. These efforts were further supported by a series of governmental and educational peak body delegations from Brazil, Chile and Colombia seeking a better understanding of how the Australian training system and qualification certification scheme worked and what sort of synergies might be available. The impact was noticed by Chilean and Colombian officials, with both countries regularly referring to the AQF program as a model for the sorts of systems they were seeking to construct in their respective countries.¹¹ The COALAR-EAG contributed to this process through an analysis of higher education enrolment numbers, which were declining, and the decision to formulate a strategy to reinvigorate the flow of Latin American students to Australia.¹²

9 Council on Australia Latin America Relations, *Annual Report 1 July 2000–30 June 2004*, Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: p. 10.

10 Council on Australia Latin America Relations, *Annual Report, 2004–2005*, Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, p. 19.

11 Jarvie, 'Latin America', *op. cit.*, note 7.

12 Council on Australia Latin America Relations, *Annual Report, 2005–2006*, Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, pp. 8–10.

By 2008 some of the strategic sheen had come off the COALAR–EAG’s programming, with activities shifting more to the encouragement of direct bilateral links through the funding of a series of study trips and visiting fellowship schemes designed to bring Latin American scholars and officials to Australia. In part this amounted to recognising that the mission had been accomplished. Education-related official Australian government representation in Latin America had received a boost by the 2008–09 fiscal year, with the full operation of DEEWR’s AEI offices in Chile, and Mexico, which were overseen by a DEEWR officer located in Santiago, Chile.¹³ Conceptions of the type of soft power seen in the British Chevening and US Fulbright scholarship scheme also began to appear in the Australian framework.¹⁴ An initial scholarship program designed to bring foreigners to Australia was launched through DEEWR and then combined with AusAID programming in 2010 to create the ‘Australia Awards’. Over \$200 million was committed annually to bring 5,000 students and professionals to Australia for additional training as well as help Australians travel to other parts of the world for education.¹⁵

The re-launch of Australia’s overseas scholarship programs under the unified banner of the Australia Awards dove-tailed nicely with a growing awareness in the more advanced Latin American economies that the region was facing a desperate need for technical skills and scientific capacity.¹⁶ Indeed, the situation facing major resource extraction companies was sufficiently severe that Brazilian multinational energy corporation Petrobras set up its own university in Rio de Janeiro, and firms such as Eletrobras—a substantial Brazilian power utility—began unilaterally offering training programs to technical officials in Bolivian and Paraguayan utility companies.¹⁷ For its part, Australia focused on being named as a preferred destination for such scholarship programs as Chile’s Becas Chile, Colombia’s COLFUTURO and Mexico’s Becas SEP–Australia. Targeting of these scholarship programs combined with a flurry of memoranda of understanding and the presence of Australian educational trade representatives in Lima, Mexico City, Santiago and São Paulo to create the rapid rise in educational exports to Peru, Mexico, Chile and Brazil seen in Table 2.1.

To this point the focus has been almost exclusively on the idea of market penetration, of capturing Latin American training opportunities for Australian

13 Council on Australia Latin America Relations, *Annual Report, 2008–2009*, Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, p. 10.

14 Joseph S. Nye Jr., *The Paradox of American Power*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002: pp. 71–4.

15 <http://www.australiaawards.gov.au/about.html>, accessed 30 May 2011.

16 Stela Meneghel, Debora Mello, Erasmo Gomes and Sandra Brisolla, ‘The University–Industry Relationship in Brazil: Trends and Implications for University Management’, *International Journal of Technology Management & Sustainable Development* 2 (3), 2004: pp. 173–90.

17 Glauber Gonçalves, ‘Pré-sal provoca boom de cursos de petróleo’, 2010; *O Estado de São Paulo*, 20 June 2010; Nicola Pamplona, ‘Um ‘Vale do Silício’ para o pré-sal’, *O Estado de São Paulo*, 7 March 2010; ‘Estatual investe para renovar quadro’, *O Estado de São Paulo*, 1 November 2010.

educational service providers. While this aspect certainly dominates in the annual reports from COALAR and the communications issued by the COALAR-EAG, there were parallel efforts to encourage collaborative research and exchange of students, which in part explains the flurry of memoranda of understanding. Between 2004 and 2009 the number of inter-university MOUs linking Australia and Latin America grew from 80 to 230.¹⁸ Unfortunately, the reality has been that while government-to-government agreements make for nice press conferences and MOUs are a good line for university annual reports, they have a poorer history of translating into concrete scholarly collaboration and student exchange. Although there has been a rise in Australian students travelling to Latin America for study, this is largely accounted for by the popularity boom that Spanish is experiencing as a second language in Australian schools and universities. The innovative International Studies program at the University of Technology Sydney,¹⁹ which sends students in a wide range of disciplines overseas and to Latin America for an extended period of study, remains very much the exception rather than the norm. In part the issue is that even institution-to-institution agreements provide only a weak basis for concrete collaborative projects. Effective collaboration almost always requires active engagement and involvement from individual researchers, which in turn requires mutual awareness and outreach that perforce would require a rise in the number of Australian-based researchers seeking out knowledge and collaboration opportunities in the Americas. While this latter aspect is improving, partly due to Australian government encouragement, progress is slow and will take some time as general awareness of the possibilities of cooperation grows beyond the small group of scholars currently engaged in collaboration with Latin American colleagues due to regional specialisations or because they happen to have personal links to the region.

Recruitment results

As it stands, the trade in educational services is very much a one-way flow. The figures in Table 2.2 point to a massive Australian educational trade surplus with Latin America, with little going on in the way of study-abroad programs that operate outside of the area of language instruction. The challenge is thus to get individual researchers collaborating with their counterparts, something that the Australia Awards program is intended to address. Increased Australian interest in the Americas, captured most notably through the 2012 launch of a Bachelor in Latin American Studies at The Australian National University, is slowly creating the grounds for something other than a commercial relationship. As the trade figures highlight, this evolution will be a slow process, but one that will be supported by the surge in enrolment numbers and student visits to Australia.

18 Jarvie, 'Latin America', *op. cit.*, note 7.

19 UTS, 'International Studies', <http://www.internationalstudies.uts.edu.au/>, accessed 23 October 2013.

Table 2.2: Australian educational service imports (\$ millions)

Countries	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Argentina	-	2	-	2	2	2	4	2	3	2
Bolivia	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Brazil	2	2	1	1	-	1	1	1	-	-
Chile	1	-	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	-
Colombia	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	-	1
Costa Rica	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	1
Cuba	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Dominican Republic	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Ecuador	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	0	1
El Salvador	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Guatemala	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Honduras	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Mexico	2	1	3	2	4	3	2	2	2	2
Nicaragua	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Panama	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Paraguay	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Peru	2	1	-	1	-	-	1	1	1	3
Puerto Rico	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Uruguay	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Venezuela	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Latin American total	11	8	7	9	11	10	12	10	10	11
World	654	698	702	741	780	846	829	878	914	977

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *International Trade in Services, by Country, by State and by Detailed Services Category, Financial Year, 2009-10* (ABS Catalogue no. 5368.0.55.003); Table 10.4.

Table 2.3: Total educational visa grants, 2005–2012

	2005–2006	2006–2007	2007–2008	2008–2009	2009–2010	2010–2011	2011–2012
Argentina	102	129	112	141	216	201	226
Bolivia	11	14	10	22	21	16	17
Brazil	6,679	8,219	11,096	12,609	11,444	9,780	9,697
Chile	401	624	768	1,300	1,294	1,356	1,373
Colombia	1,663	3,294	4,951	5,954	6,312	5,055	5,716
Costa Rica	0	17	10	13	24	9	20
Cuba	0	3	7	2	6	14	9
Dom. Rep.	2	3	11	98	4	5	9
Ecuador	50	61	75	45	110	100	176
El Salvador	15	11	23	45	71	50	50
Guatemala	6	10	10	17	12	11	26
Honduras	5	5	7	2	5	4	6
Mexico	835	1,037	1,104	1,115	1,146	1,063	1,094
Nicaragua	3	0	3	4	3	3	8
Panama	10	7	13	19	6	12	12
Paraguay	18	18	16	9	11	9	20
Peru	350	590	1,009	1,326	1,166	916	851
Uruguay	21	19	20	24	20	18	25
Venezuela	97	134	278	352	578	721	573
Lat Am. totals	10,268	14,195	19,523	23,097	22,449	19,126	19,665
World totals	186,099	223,988	273,663	316,287	265,647	250,438	253,046
Latin America as % of total	5.5%	6.3%	7.1%	7.3%	8.5%	7.6%	7.8%

Source: Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Student Visa Grants by Sector and Country: <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/statistics/study/>.

The most accurate way to get a sense of how many foreign students are coming to Australia and what sort of educational path they are following is to track a mix of visa grant data from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and enrolment and actual commencement data from Australia Education International. Similar data for Australians travelling to Latin America is not available. As Table 2.3 highlights, the absolute numbers of Latin Americans seeking Australian visas for educational pursuits has increased over the five years 2005–11 and the Latin American proportion of the total has risen as well. From a starting point of 10,268 visa grants in 2005–06, the number rose to a high of 22,449 in 2009–10, representing a shift from 5.5 per cent to 8.5 per

cent of the total number of visas issued, before dropping to 19,655 in 2011–12 and 7.8 per cent of the total issued. Of particular importance for validation of the export promotion strategies outlined above is the pattern of where these students came from. Recruitment efforts in Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Peru paid particularly handsome dividends, contributing a substantial proportion of the more than doubling of student flows over the time period (Table 2.5a and 2.5b). Careful work in Colombia stands out in particular, prompting a near four-fold rise, followed by the near tripling of numbers from Chile and Peru. While some of the rise can be attributed to the surging economic growth these four countries experienced as a result of the global commodities boom, the underlying reality is that Australia is not the automatic focus of attention in Latin America, suggesting that the recruitment strategies were beneficial.

Table 2.4a: Latin American enrolments by educational sector (2002–2008)

	2002		2004		2006		2008	
	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	Number	% of total
Higher education	1,510	19.1%	1,949	23.8%	1,964	12.3%	2,460	8.6%
ELICOS	3,472	43.9%	3,199	39.0%	8,454	53.1%	16,592	57.9%
VET	2,196	27.7%	2,179	26.6%	4,442	27.9%	8,668	30.2%
Other	738	9.3%	867	10.6%	1,072	6.7%	942	3.3%
Total	7,916	100.0%	8,194	100.0%	15,932	100.0%	28,662	100.0%

Source: https://aei.gov.au/research/International-Student-Data/Documents/INTERNATIONAL%20STUDENT%20DATA/2010/2010_basic_pivot_all.zip.

Table 2.4b: Latin American enrolments by educational sector (2009–2012)

	2009		2010		2011		2012	
	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	Number	% of total
Higher education	3,030	8.9%	3,609	10.8%	3,883	12.3%	4,044	12.5%
ELICOS	19,867	58.5%	18,351	55.2%	16,987	53.9%	18,156	56.2%
VET	9,998	29.4%	10,403	31.3%	9,785	31.1%	9,049	28.0%
Other	1,057	3.1%	901	2.7%	858	2.7%	1,049	3.2%
Total	33,952	100.0%	33,264	100.0%	31,513	100.0%	32,298	100.0%

Source: https://aei.gov.au/research/International-Student-Data/Documents/INTERNATIONAL%20STUDENT%20DATA/2010/2010_basic_pivot_all.zip.

Table 2.5a: Total Education program enrolment and commencement (2002–2008)

	2002		2004		2006		2008	
	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started
Argentina	202	120	144	65	138	84	174	105
Bolivia	22	12	7	3	16	11	14	8
Brazil	4,214	3,169	4,702	3,473	10,080	7,612	15,925	11,888
Chile	144	105	256	187	539	416	1,017	787
Colombia	2,296	1,354	1,570	781	2,995	2,168	7,680	5,530
Costa Rica	15	10	10	2	5	0	13	8
Cuba					2	1	7	5
Dom. Rep.	4	2	8	4	5	5	9	5
Ecuador	57	30	70	35	81	54	128	84
El Salvador	11	8	17	9	25	12	36	24
Guatemala	5	2	9	6	9	5	16	11
Honduras	5	3	3	1	6	3	8	2
Mexico	572	419	1,015	657	1,240	866	1,466	982
Nicaragua	3	2	3	0	3	2	6	5
Panama	14	11	9	5	11	4	23	12
Paraguay	8	5	13	9	19	13	22	19
Peru	118	61	168	108	570	412	1,705	1,180
Uruguay	9	5	28	17	20	11	21	13
Venezuela	217	113	162	77	168	104	392	275
Latin Am. total	7,916	5,431	8,194	5,439	15,932	11,783	28,662	20,943
World total	273,702	160,332	323,979	175,391	379,939	207,137	541,587	323,321
Latin Am. as % of World total	2.9%	3.4%	2.5%	3.1%	4.2%	5.7%	5.3%	6.5%
Latin Am. start as % of enrolled	68.6%		66.4%		74.0%		59.7%	
World start as % of enrolled	58.6%		54.1%		54.5%		59.7%	

Source: https://aei.gov.au/research/International-Student-Data/Documents/INTERNATIONAL%20STUDENT%20DATA/2010/2010_basic_pivot_all.zip.

Table 2.5b: Total Education program enrolment and commencement (2009–2012)

	2009		2010		2011		2012	
	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started
Argentina	207	139	267	184	279	188	280	188
Bolivia	23	15	29	20	26	15	25	15
Brazil	17,558	12,598	16,072	11,826	15,266	11,306	15,092	11,207
Chile	1,608	1,229	1,715	1,182	1,972	1,399	2,005	1,324
Colombia	9,861	6,944	10,034	6,846	8,917	6,284	10,148	7,477
Costa Rica	11	5	28	22	22	9	31	20
Cuba	14	9	4	0	12	8	11	6
Dom. Rep.	6	1	6	4	8	7	7	3
Ecuador	169	115	192	113	171	105	274	206
El Salvador	76	55	106	73	98	59	77	55
Guatemala	26	19	28	15	21	14	13	5
Honduras	7	3	5	2	10	6	9	8
Mexico	1,534	1,079	1,576	1,124	1,586	1,070	1,568	1,047
Nicaragua	7	4	6	3	3	1	0	0
Panama	25	17	24	18	18	7	15	9
Paraguay	9	4	13	7	11	7	12	6
Peru	2,248	1,510	2,270	1,471	1,985	1,258	1,773	1,159
Uruguay	26	16	26	21	32	20	26	17
Venezuela	537	383	867	634	1,076	736	931	535
Latin Am total	33,952	24,145	33,268	23,565	31,513	22,499	32,297	23,287
World total	630,630	364,087	619,119	329,352	554,359	295,928	515,853	279,335
Latin Am as % of World total	5.4%	6.6%	5.4%	7.2%	5.7%	7.6%	6.3%	8.3%
Latin Am start as % of enrolled	71.1%		70.8%		71.4%		72.1%	
World start as % of enrolled	57.7%		53.2%		53.4%		54.2%	

Source: https://aei.gov.au/research/International-Student-Data/Documents/INTERNATIONAL%20STUDENT%20DATA/2010/2010_basic_pivot_all.zip.

As has been noted above, one of the overarching characteristics of Australian educational engagement with Latin America is its commercial nature. This

does not necessarily fit well with the rhetoric of collaboration, exchange and mutual learning that forms the soft power core of official Australian government rhetoric on inter-continental educational relations, which is generally framed around conceptions of post-secondary education in pursuit of undergraduate and graduate university degrees. Similarly, the public and repeated promises of collaboration from a number of leading Australian research university heads have yet to be backed with the resources to kick-start necessary researcher-to-researcher links. The rationale for the disjuncture between the rhetoric and reality is made clear in Table 2.4a and 2.4b.²⁰ Although Australia is home to a number of world-class universities, university education has declined in relative significance in terms of Latin American enrolments despite rising in absolute terms. While higher education enrolment numbers have risen from 1,510 in 2002 to 4,044 in 2012, the relative share of university students as a proportion of the Latin American student body in Australia has fallen from 19.1 per cent to 12.5 per cent. During this same period enrolments in ELICOS programs have soared from 3,472 to 18,156, moving from a 43.9 per cent to 56.2 per cent share of the total number of Latin American students in Australia. Vocational training has seen similarly impressive gross number gains, going from 2,196 enrolled students in 2002 to a high of 10,403 in 2010, before receding to 9,049 in 2012, marking a steady proportion of about 28 per cent of students.

While all three of the major educational visa categories have seen huge gains, reflecting a 408 per cent increase in enrolments, by far the largest gains have come in the ELICOS sector. This is partially a reflection of three factors motivating Latin American educational travel. The first is a desire to acquire English language skills. Second is distaste for the cultural marginalisation that occurs in parts of Europe and the United States, where Latin Americans can be pejoratively dismissed as ‘Latinos’. More important in this context is the relatively greater difficulty of getting away from Spanish and Spanish-speaking communities in significant portions of the United States. The smaller Latin American and Iberian community in Australia means that there is little in the way of cultural and class-based preconceptions and even less pressure to continue using Spanish or Portuguese. These factors are reinforced by the third, namely the widespread availability of well-paid part-time work in Australia and the provisions in Australian visa regulations that allow for a considerable amount of part-time employment, which is partially offset by the

²⁰ While all data presented here is from the Australian government’s Australia Education International database, there are several critical weaknesses that must be highlighted. First, data for the 2010 academic year was only available through to September, and thus has not been included in the discussion because it would not provide an accurate portrait of trends and developments. Second, AEI releases enrolment and commencement data in a complex ‘pivot’ table for Microsoft Excel. Unfortunately, an error appears to have been made in the construction of the table’s underlying formula. When ‘all months’ is selected, the total presented is the sum of the cumulative total for each month, which means that January is counted twelve times, February eleven times, March ten times, and so on. To avoid grossly inflated and inaccurate numbers, this chapter makes use of the data for December of each year as representative of the entire academic year in question.

higher cost of living. Employment possibilities are an important consideration for individuals who may not have sufficient funds saved to cover the entire cost of their educational program.

Two items are critical to attendance at overseas universities: cost and access to visas. As Table 2.6a and 2.6b highlights, it is in precisely those Latin American countries possessing either rapid economic growth rates or strong scholarship schemes that Australian universities have most successfully recruited students. Expressed as a percentage of total foreign higher education students actively studying in Australia, Latin America remains small at two per cent in 2012, marginally up in proportional terms from 1.5 per cent in 2002. In absolute terms the change has been a more substantial doubling in numbers, going from 865 to 1,795 students. The most rapid substantive growth has occurred in those countries where DEST/DEEWR has educational trade missions and where the Australian government has directed its assistance for international education fairs.²¹ Chile, Colombia and Mexico have been the drivers of the growth in numbers. Colombia has emerged as a particularly significant source of students thanks to a mixture of aggressive recruiting and the growth of the COLFUTURO scholarship program. Chile's rapid growth reflects increased efforts by the Chilean government to have its students spend a period of time overseas, which was reiterated in 2011 through a memorandum of understanding between the Australia Group of Eight Universities and the University of Chile to promote collaborative research, commercialisation of research and consulting, and mutual recognition of qualifications.²² Increases in Mexican numbers stem from sustained efforts to strengthen inter-governmental and inter-institutional linkages around 2004–05. While Brazilian numbers have grown, the rate has been less than might be expected given the economic growth the country has experienced. In large part this is explained by the bureaucratic difficulties of getting Brazilian accreditation bodies to recognise foreign degrees, including those from major Australian, UK and US universities.

21 'Primera Feria Educativa Latino Australia Education', *El Tiempo* (Colombia), 2 September 2010; 'Estudar no exterior é tema de três eventos', *Folha de São Paulo*, 30 August 2009.

22 Group of Eight, *Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Rectors of Chilean Universities and the Group of Eight, Australia*, Canberra, 2011: http://www.go8.edu.au/__documents/university-staff/international-collaboration/go8-chile_mou.pdf, accessed 30 May 2011.

Table 2.6a: Higher education (2002–2008)

	2002		2004		2006		2008	
	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started
Argentina	90	49	98	35	63	24	63	22
Bolivia	12	7	4	1	5	1	3	0
Brazil	393	225	426	173	461	217	583	299
Chile	42	26	90	46	135	72	180	105
Colombia	614	363	677	249	575	238	732	383
Costa Rica	8	4	6	1	2	0	8	4
Cuba					2	1	4	2
Dom. Rep.	1	0	2	1	4	4	5	2
Ecuador	22	14	37	16	30	16	48	24
El Salvador	5	4	6	0	8	2	7	4
Guatemala	2	0	4	3	7	3	5	3
Honduras	2	2	2	0	4	2	5	1
Mexico	212	121	399	187	384	178	413	192
Nicaragua	2	1	3	0	0	0	0	0
Panama	1	1	5	4	7	2	7	1
Paraguay	1	1	2	1	4	0	3	1
Peru	37	17	83	51	206	116	304	127
Uruguay	5	2	9	7	6	1	5	3
Venezuela	61	28	96	47	61	22	85	48
Latin Am. total	1,510	865	1,949	822	1,964	899	2,460	1,221
World total	115,405	56,680	150,748	65,136	169,599	66,345	181,412	77,427
Latin Am. as % of world total	1.3%	1.5%	1.3%	1.3%	1.2%	1.4%	1.4%	1.6%
Latin Am. start as % of enrolled	57.3%		42.2%		45.8%		42.7%	
World start as % of enrolled	49.1%		43.2%		39.1%		42.7%	

Source: https://aei.gov.au/research/International-Student-Data/Documents/INTERNATIONAL%20STUDENT%20DATA/2010/2010_basic_pivot_all.zip.

Table 2.6b: Higher education (2009–2012)

	2009		2010		2011		2012	
	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started
Argentina	74	35	75	31	79	34	91	42
Bolivia	3	1	8	6	11	5	12	6
Brazil	690	343	762	361	762	320	755	318
Chile	335	252	440	213	506	233	508	217
Colombia	899	495	1,116	605	1,234	611	1,312	595
Costa Rica	6	2	15	11	14	3	15	6
Cuba	4	1	0	0	4	2	5	1
Dom. Rep.	3	0	1	0	3	3	5	2
Ecuador	49	23	84	44	79	33	134	90
El Salvador	7	1	6	1	9	5	17	13
Guatemala	13	11	13	3	8	3	7	2
Honduras	4	2	2	0	4	1	3	2
Mexico	470	239	539	260	563	252	584	243
Nicaragua	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Panama	6	1	3	2	3	1	5	3
Paraguay	4	2	4	1	4	2	5	2
Peru	334	162	327	132	300	114	274	129
Uruguay	8	5	10	7	8	2	5	1
Venezuela	121	69	203	120	292	164	307	123
Latin Am. total	3,030	1,644	3,609	1,797	3,883	1,788	4,044	1,795
World total	202,314	88,454	243,591	102,538	241,181	95,406	230,923	89,326
Latin Am. as % of world total	1.5%	1.9%	1.5%	1.8%	1.6%	1.9%	1.8%	2.0%
Latin Am. start as % of enrolled	54.3%		49.8%		46.0%		44.4%	
World start as % of enrolled	43.7%		42.1%		39.6%		38.7%	

Source: https://aei.gov.au/research/International-Student-Data/Documents/INTERNATIONAL%20STUDENT%20DATA/2010/2010_basic_pivot_all.zip.

An interesting aspect of Table 2.6a and 2.6b is the extent to which Latin American uptake of Australian higher education visas continued throughout the global financial crisis, a period marked by a decline in numbers from other parts of the world. In part this represents value for money. Despite the higher international fees and the cost of living in Australia, the sum total still remains less than that of an equivalent university education in a leading US or British university. Moreover, the second critical aspect—visas—is also an important factor. Indeed, the visa question is a policy research area in its own right, with Australian immigration and visa procedures being nearly universally held up by Latin Americans as burdensome, expensive, demeaning and insulting. To put it in context, Australia’s list of electronic travel authority eligible countries does not include a single Latin American nation. The saving grace for Australia on the visa front is that competing education providers such as Britain, Canada and the United States have similarly exclusionary immigration procedures in place. When combined with the cost factor this has helped push students towards Australia. Climatic considerations also matter, with the range of temperatures and lifestyle in Australia’s major cities paralleling those found in cities such as Bogotá, Santiago and São Paulo.

The pattern of student recruitment being concentrated in the small group of countries with an Australian trade mission is repeated in the pattern of granted ELICOS visas. As Table 2.7a and 2.7b highlight, Latin Americans as a percentage of total ELICOS participants jumped five-fold from 2002 to 2012, going from 2,741 to 14,551. This compares to numbers for global ELICOS participation that grew two-fold through 2012. Global numbers grew from 42,118 in 2002 to 105,877 in 2009, dropping to 75,377 in 2012 after the global financial crisis. Again, Latin American students were predominantly drawn from the wealthier countries of Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Mexico. The increase in the number of Peruvians during the period surveyed in the table highlights the linkage to the importance of growing disposable income in the source country. In all cases the growth in numbers corresponds with consolidated economic stabilisation and the trickle-through of the commodity boom. As a number of observers in Brasilia reiterated, Australia may be far, but it is still relatively cost-effective compared to Britain and the climate in Queensland is very similar to that along Brazil’s coast. The potential for comparatively well-paid part-time work as well as the proximity to Asia also emerge as positive factors for students who wish to extend their study into work-visit periods.²³

23 Fred Hilmer, ‘The Dumb Blonde of International Education’, *The Australian*, 1 November 2010, p. 14.

Table 2.7a: ELICOS (2002–2008)

	2002		2004		2006		2008	
	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started
Argentina	53	39	21	14	41	33	56	43
Bolivia	8	4	2	1	4	3	7	6
Brazil	2,222	1,876	2,301	1,936	5,668	4,615	9,673	7,929
Chile	54	43	105	90	296	253	563	471
Colombia	846	575	459	332	1,736	1,441	4,622	3,591
Costa Rica	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
Cuba					0	0	2	2
Dom. Rep.	1	0	4	3	1	1	1	0
Ecuador	18	10	20	14	32	27	46	36
El Salvador	4	2	2	2	5	3	16	14
Guatemala	1	0	1	1	1	1	3	2
Honduras	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mexico	153	123	191	151	337	267	441	325
Nicaragua	0	0	0	0	2	1	5	4
Panama	6	4	0	0	1	1	14	10
Paraguay	4	3	7	6	12	11	11	10
Peru	27	15	44	37	239	195	904	723
Uruguay	1	1	9	4	7	6	7	5
Venezuela	72	44	33	18	71	59	220	158
Latin Am. total	3,472	2,741	3,199	2,609	8,454	6,917	16,592	13,330
World total	57,452	42,118	61,743	45,371	76,905	59,127	127,206	100,737
Latin Am. as % of world total	6.0%	6.5%	5.2%	5.8%	11.0%	11.7%	13.0%	13.2%
Latin Am. start as % of enrolled	78.9%		81.6%		81.8%		79.2%	
World start as % of enrolled	73.3%		73.5%		76.9%		79.2%	

Source: https://aei.gov.au/research/International-Student-Data/Documents/INTERNATIONAL%20STUDENT%20DATA/2010/2010_basic_pivot_all.zip.

Table 2.7b: ELICOS (2009–2012)

	2009		2010		2011		2012	
	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started
Argentina	70	59	90	77	91	76	84	82
Bolivia	13	10	13	8	9	6	7	5
Brazil	10,502	8,197	9,081	7,329	8,627	6,946	8,556	6,831
Chile	907	732	860	677	984	809	974	753
Colombia	6,380	5,056	6,206	4,592	5,449	4,345	6,921	5,662
Costa Rica	1	0	5	5	6	4	10	9
Cuba	7	6	3	0	7	5	6	5
Dom. Rep.	0	0	1	1	3	2	1	0
Ecuador	75	59	64	41	48	36	90	76
El Salvador	45	36	54	38	42	30	23	18
Guatemala	3	2	6	5	5	3	4	2
Honduras	0	0	2	2	2	2	2	2
Mexico	401	312	436	359	377	283	370	293
Nicaragua	4	2	2	1	0	0	0	0
Panama	11	9	12	10	5	1	2	2
Paraguay	1	0	3	3	3	2	2	1
Peru	1,132	867	1,011	779	773	585	708	555
Uruguay	9	7	10	10	11	7	12	9
Venezuela	306	236	492	397	545	389	374	246
Latin Am. total	19,867	15,590	18,351	14,334	16,987	13,531	18,146	14,551
World total	137,477	105,877	113,477	83,604	95,005	72,341	95,224	75,377
Latin Am. as % of world total	14.5%	14.7%	16.2%	17.1%	17.9%	18.7%	19.1%	19.3%
Latin Am. start as % of enrolled	78.5%		78.1%		79.7%		80.2%	
World start as % of enrolled	77.0%		73.7%		76.1%		79.2%	

Source: https://aei.gov.au/research/International-Student-Data/Documents/INTERNATIONAL%20STUDENT%20DATA/2010/2010_basic_pivot_all.zip.

Australian ELICOS providers do face several serious challenges in the expansion of their Latin American market share. The first is the perception of Australia as a safe and welcoming place to study. As one São Paulo-based observer noted in an informal discussion, the May 2009 attacks on Indian students in Melbourne were noted with some concern by Latin Americans trying to decide between Australia and a US culture where Spanish has become an unofficial second language.²⁴ The 18 March 2012 killing of Brazilian Roberto Laudisio Curti by Tazer-wielding Sydney police did not help calm these concerns.²⁵ Compounding these perceptions was a rising sense that the Australian ELICOS sector was poorly regulated and far from concerned with the welfare of visiting students or their educational outcomes; as *The Sunday Age* noted with an attention-grabbing headline: 'Students from abroad treated like cash cows'.²⁶ Australian governments at the national and state level did respond to these concerns, reforming standards in the sector, increasing insurance funds to ensure that students received an education even in circumstances where a particular ELICOS school became insolvent, and instituting a series of student crisis lines and police response units. All of these steps appear to have helped maintain the growth rate in this sector.

When attention is turned to educational linkages, thoughts generally go first to university exchanges and language training. The reality in the Australian case is that vocational educational training (VET) is a more important part of the services export picture, encompassing not only the provision of educational programming in Australia, but also training programs conducted in Latin America. In terms of enrolments, VET visa class programs represented 28.0 per cent of the total Latin American student body in 2012, marginally up from 27.7 per cent in 2002 (Table 2.4a and 2.4b). Areas covered by VET programs are broad, encompassing everything from hairdressing to the operation of heavy mining equipment. The importance of resource-related skills, information technology and tourism training shows in the concentration of VET visa grants to nationals from Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Peru (Table 2.8a and 2.8b), four countries seeking rapid expansion of technical skills in these industries. Surges in the number of students coming to Australia from Latin America and the rest of the world for VET programs speak to the concentrated effort that this sector has made in building the industry in Australia.

24 Phil Mercer, 'Indian Students Claim Epidemic of Racist Violence in Australia', *Voice of America Online*, 4 June 2009; Andrew Harrison, 'Indian Students Grow Wary of Australia Following Attacks', *Wall Street Journal*, 3 June 2009.

25 Jared Owens, 'Coroner Condemns "Thuggish" Police Over Tazer Death of Brazilian Student Roberto Laudisio Curti', *The Australian*, 14 November, 2012.

26 Natalie Craig, 'Students From Abroad Treated Like Cash Cows', *Sunday Age*, 23 May 2010, p. 13.

Table 2.8a: VET (2002–2008)

	2002		2004		2006		2008	
	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started
Argentina	43	17	17	9	27	21	43	28
Bolivia	2	1	1	1	5	5	3	2
Brazil	1,226	732	1,594	1,036	3,486	2,360	5,334	3,344
Chile	18	10	15	8	37	25	185	126
Colombia	712	330	375	159	610	427	2,271	1,510
Costa Rica	6	5	3	0	1	0	2	2
Cuba					0	0	1	1
Dom. Rep.	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Ecuador	13	3	9	4	13	7	21	15
El Salvador	1	1	6	4	9	5	12	6
Guatemala	2	2	2	0	1	1	6	4
Honduras	2	0	0	0	1	0	2	0
Mexico	47	30	82	54	107	59	216	121
Nicaragua	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Panama	4	3	2	1	1	0	1	0
Paraguay	3	1	3	1	3	2	7	7
Peru	43	24	33	16	105	87	485	321
Uruguay	1	0	9	5	5	2	8	4
Venezuela	73	33	28	11	31	19	69	56
Latin Am. total	2,196	1,192	2,179	1,309	4,442	3,020	8,668	5,549
World total	53,689	29,425	58,232	32,046	82,526	48,479	174,570	105,702
Latin Am. as % of world total	4.1%	4.1%	3.7%	4.1%	5.4%	6.2%	5.0%	5.2%
Latin Am. start as % of enrolled	54.3%		60.1%		68.0%		60.5%	
World start as % of enrolled	54.8%		55.0%		58.7%		60.5%	

Source: https://aei.gov.au/research/International-Student-Data/Documents/INTERNATIONAL%20STUDENT%20DATA/2010/2010_basic_pivot_all.zip.

Table 2.8b: VET (2009–2012)

	2009		2010		2011		2012	
	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started	Enrolled	Started
Argentina	54	36	92	66	97	66	80	51
Bolivia	5	3	7	5	5	5	3	3
Brazil	5,967	3,677	5,938	3,862	5,620	2,798	5,306	3,603
Chile	292	175	333	215	414	292	458	298
Colombia	2,494	1,313	2,610	1,574	2,142	1,262	1,810	1,136
Costa Rica	3	2	6	4	2	2	6	5
Cuba	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dom. Rep.	2	1	2	1	1	0	1	0
Ecuador	32	21	30	16	23	16	30	22
El Salvador	22	16	42	31	46	36	23	23
Guatemala	7	4	7	5	4	3	0	0
Honduras	1	0	0	0	1	1	2	2
Mexico	237	148	245	173	280	202	292	207
Nicaragua	3	2	2	1	2	0	0	0
Panama	6	5	8	5	8	3	6	3
Paraguay	4	2	5	2	3	2	2	2
Peru	767	471	915	549	898	548	772	459
Uruguay	8	3	5	3	12	10	8	6
Venezuela	92	67	156	105	227	176	234	153
Latin Am. total	9,998	5,947	10,403	6,617	9,785	5,422	9,033	5,973
World total	231,670	131,221	206,581	107,752	16,9634	97,369	145,540	85,317
Latin Am. as % of world total	4.3%	4.5%	5.0%	6.1%	5.8%	5.6%	6.2%	7.0%
Latin Am. start as % of enrolled	59.5%		63.6%		55.4%		66.1%	
World start as % of enrolled	56.6%		52.2%		57.4%		58.6%	

Source: http://www.aei.gov.au/AEI/Statistics/StudentEnrolmentAndVisaStatistics/2010/2010_basic_pivot_all_zip.htm.

As a series of press reports in 2010 highlighted, visas for VET programming were also used as a device to evade Australian immigration regulations. This resulted in the growth of exploitative schools that used VET programming and the associated visa permission to undertake limited paid employment as cover for migrant labour schemes. The global totals in 2009 show a dramatic spike in growth, surging from 24,425 in 2002 to 131,221 in 2009, which was the height of exploitation of this visa loophole. When combined with the decidedly cowboy nature of a handful of the registered VET programs, which gave only tacit acknowledgement to their putative educational function, the rapid policy redirection from the Australian government that took place in 2009–10 is hardly surprising.²⁷ The result was major changes in the number of VET and other student visas being offered, with particular emphasis being placed on tightening the list of occupations for which the government was willing to issue training visas.²⁸ These regulatory changes accompanied the global financial crisis, prompting a major drop in global uptake of VET places (Table 2.8a and 2.8b), going from 131,221 in 2009 to 85,317 by 2012. The parallel Latin American uptake of VET places was the reverse, rising 5,947 in 2009 to 6,617 in 2010 before receding to 5,973 in 2012. The disjuncture in these comparative statistics points to the different approach to pursuit of VET programming in Australia. While some countries use VET programs to access work in the Australian labour market, for Latin Americans the emphasis is more on the acquisition of skills that can be used upon return to the student’s home country.

Challenges and opportunities

Education and intellectual collaboration represents an excellent area in which to build bilateral relations. In the Brazilian case, France continues to reap the rewards of the efforts it devoted to helping develop higher education in Brazil;²⁹ and the British are explicit regarding the role of education and research as a means of practising soft power in their Prime Minister’s Initiative for International Education.³⁰ Education and research is an engagement area that builds the sorts of links sought by foreign ministries—deep person-to-

27 Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Government of Australia, ‘Student convicted over Sydney college immigration fraud’, Press Release, 12 July 2010; Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Government of Australia, ‘Overview of Student Visa Changes to Assist International Education Sector’, Press Release, 16 December, 2010.

28 Heath Gilmore with Nick O’Malley, ‘Government, industry more concerned for selves than students’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 March 2010, p. 15; Margaret Wehnam, ‘Student visas denied’, *The Courier-Mail*, 8 January, 2010, p. 18; Heath Gilmore, ‘Overseas students as good as gold’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 November, 2009, p. 3.

29 Thomas E. Skidmore, ‘Lévi-Strauss, Braudel and Brazil: A Case of Mutual Influence’, *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 22, 2003, (3): pp. 340–49.

30 Managed by the British Council: more information on the Prime Minister’s Initiative for International Education can be found at <http://www.britishcouncil.org/eumd-pmi2.htm>.

person and institution-to-institution connections based upon commonalities and shared purposes—all of which serve as a strong foundation for expanded political and economic cooperation. In substantive terms all of the necessary elements are in place for a strong partnership. Recent research has quantified the extent to which a low-skilled workforce is negatively impacting Latin American development,³¹ prompting a concentration from regional governments on programs that upgrade skills and general scientific and technical capacity within their respective countries. There is also a keen awareness in Latin America that long-term regional growth will require a high-value added economic core that builds around knowledge accrued from advanced research and university studies.³² This is directly reflected in the increased funding that the Chilean, Colombian and Mexican governments are directing to their scholarship programs, including the Brazilian creation of ‘sandwich’ scholarships that allow PhD students to study abroad for a year, and more recently the ‘Science Without Borders’ scholarship program.

Australia thus possesses two of the things that Latin American governments see as essential for sustainable development: an established and reputable vocational skills sector and a world class university sector engaged in cutting-edge research. A significant number of institutions in Australia have worked to build upon this to attract international students as an income-generating device.³³ In the Latin American context perhaps the most active has been the University of Queensland with the support of the Queensland government, which has sought to marry cultural and linguistic studies with the institution’s existing strengths in resource extraction industries. A similar phenomenon is occurring at The Australian National University, which is leveraging its policy sciences and Asia-Pacific expertise as the basis for expanded exchange and collaboration with Latin America, most notably through the launching of a Bachelor of Latin American Studies degree and the activities of the Australian National Centre for Latin American Studies.

When combined with the surges in ELICOS and VET enrolments from Latin America, the Australian government’s November 2009 decision to transfer the international marketing and promotion of Australian education from AEI to Austrade emerges as both a challenge and an opportunity. Of particular note

31 Diego Restuccia, ‘The Latin American Development Problem’, *Serie Macroeconomía del Desarrollo* No. 81, Santiago, Chile: CEPAL, March, 2009.

32 Carlos Lordelo, *Estadão.edu*, e Mariana Mandelli, ‘Até 2014, 75 mil alunos devem receber bolsa para estudar no exterior’, *O Estado de São Paulo*, 7 June 2011; José Antonio Ocampo and Juan Martin, *Globalization and Development: A Latin American and Caribbean Perspective*, Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003.

33 On the process in Australia and in general, see Philip G. Altbach, ‘Higher Education Crosses Borders’, *Change*, March–April 2003; Philip G. Altbach and Jane Knight, ‘The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities’, *Journal of Studies in International Education* 11 (34), 2007: pp. 290–305; Naidoo, ‘Repositioning Higher Education as a Global Commodity’; Marginson and Sawir, ‘University Leaders’ Strategies in a Global Environment’; Marginson, ‘Dynamics of Global Competition in Higher Education’.

in this context was the decision to discontinue the AEI Education Counsellor position in Santiago, although a subsequent decision created a near-identical Austrade post. Posts were also established for locally engaged staff in São Paulo, Mexico City and Lima, with responsibilities also spreading to cover Venezuela, Colombia and Argentina. The unanswered question is whether this new structure will have the agility and contacts necessary not only to continue attracting new students to Australia in the face of stiff international competition, but also to set aside the commercial imperative and work in the opposite direction to impel Australian students and researchers to opportunities in Latin America.

The obvious danger with the change in the Australian government's engagement structure is that a wealth of contacts will be lost during the transition process. Austrade is hoping to offset this risk by providing a closer service to Australian entities seeking to enter the Latin American market by providing customised services that meet the specific needs of each educational institution. This will initially be directed through the articulation of a new strategy built on sector-wide consultations. In some respects the transfer of marketing management responsibility to Austrade can be seen as a test of how firmly Australian institutions have established themselves in the region—in the years before AEI took over regional management Austrade oversaw an approximately twenty per cent drop in Latin American enrolment in Australia. As some industry participants and observers noted, the concern with Austrade is that it focuses excessively on the trade aspect and not enough on relationship building, which is inimical to the sense of cooperative advancement that many feel is crucial to the education sector.³⁴ The flip-side is that Austrade has brought a wider set of engagement tools to the table, and began its approach to the issue by explicitly seeking counsel and advice from all sectors of the education industry in Australia and Latin America.

With respect to university-based research, of even greater interest to Latin American countries is Australian expertise in shared areas of economic importance such as mining, agro-industry, water and clean energy. It is thus not surprising that one of the priorities of the Latin American diplomatic corps in Canberra is building linkages with Australian universities and seeking ways of motivating Australian academics to engage their Latin American counterparts and encourage collaboration and exchange, which includes Australians travelling to the region for extended visits. This brings us to one of the primary barriers to expanded intercontinental relations in the education sector, namely the lingering vestiges of what can only be termed Australian parochialism.

Use of the term parochialism is sweeping and perhaps not entirely fair as a capstone descriptor, but it does capture the essence of the still-prevalent

34 Confidential interviews, Canberra, September 2010.

Australian attitude that sees Latin America as a developing, slightly lost region and more latterly as a new market ripe for exploitation. At its core rests the question of language and the perception that expanded engagement will not be possible until more Latin Americans speak English. The depth of this challenge was apparent at the 2010 COALAR-EAG Roundtable meeting, where the leader of one Australian VET provider operating in Chile was clear that one of the greatest barriers to expanding their business was the inability of Chilean students to follow the lessons in English. When asked why the program was not also delivered in Spanish, the reply was that this was not the comparative advantage of the firm and that Spanish firms would fill that function more efficiently. The idea of either developing Spanish skills in the firm's instructors or recruiting bilingual instructors was dismissed as unnecessary. Others at the Roundtable took a different view, with some working on creating Spanish-language programming for delivery in the region. The point is that pockets of parochialism persist, but are slowly being driven out by a mix of more aggressive entrepreneurship and a generational shift that is bringing to the fore a new generation of Australians fascinated with Latin America, which is reflected in the surge in individuals studying Spanish in post-secondary institutions.³⁵ While this is an initial positive sign, it does miss out on the region's leading economy and market of over 180 million, the Portuguese-speaking population of Brazil. It is also a far from certain indicator that the marketing spin of Australian universities will be matched by the concrete resources pushing for active and ongoing collaboration.

Unfortunately, this sense of cultural and linguistic parochialism continues to pervade key segments of the Australian government, civil society and academy. Government officials face a constant battle to direct political attention towards the Americas. This appeared to ease slightly with the regional interest shown by Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd in 2010 and 2011, and Prime Minister Julia Gillard's meeting with Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, but the underlying reality is that the key decision-makers within the Australian government retain a narrow focus on the United States and China. There is little wider awareness within the Australian government machinery that there is much to learn from the Americas. More significantly for the subject of this chapter, the potential and actual academic contributions coming from Latin America are implicitly discounted by the assessment processes used for Australian Research Council grants, which do not include many important regional publications and thus effectively penalise researchers for publishing in these venues or entering into collaborative projects that will be published in Spanish or Portuguese. The resultant sense of isolation for Latin American students and scholars is further amplified by Australian government visa policies that seem to grant privileged

35 Jarvie, 'Latin America', *op. cit.*, note 7.

access to the richest countries irrespective of visa overstay rates from countries such as Canada, the UK and US, yet require onerous application processes from established professionals in the Americas seeking to collaborate with their antipodean colleagues.

In one sense these linguistic and cultural anecdotes simply reflect the risk aversion of many smaller Australian firms (in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney), to operations in countries that are not well understood. But they also point to a deeper Australian lack of understanding of the current realities in Latin America, which is certainly not a challenge unique to Australia, but also found in North America and Western Europe. One of the challenges Australian diplomats face when touring their political leaders through the region is how to prepare them for the reality that they are visiting sophisticated, developed urban economies, not ramshackle settlements drowning under oceans of starving poor. The same challenge faces inter-institutional agreements with Australian university administrators focusing upon the developing nature of Latin American economies rather than the sophistication of many sectors in these countries. While the succession of education tours conducted by Group of Eight university members is helping break down this lingering aspect of Australian parochialism, it has yet to translate into a wealth of substantial and sustained inter-continental research linkages. In particular, it is not yet leading to a widespread exchange of the postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows that formed the foundation for the strong bilateral inter-institutional linkages found in France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States. Worse, this sort of attitude has coloured aspects of government-to-government discussions on mutual qualifications recognition, which at times have appeared to be dominated by an Australian view that Latin American post-secondary institutions are at best of mediocre quality, with Latin Americans—particularly Brazilians—responding in kind that they will not recognise the validity of the AQF. While in some cases this supposition is certainly true, a similar argument can also be made about some higher education institutions in Australia, Western Europe and North America. The more pressing reality is that bureaucratic structures in some Latin American countries designed to protect nascent post-secondary educational institutions are not keeping up with the increasingly globalised nature of knowledge generation and education.³⁶

This brings us to the second aspect of Australian parochialism, namely the supposition that, in regard to education, Latin America needs Australia more than the obverse. As reports from DEEWR, COALAR and comments at the 2010 COALAR–EAG Roundtable make clear, Latin America is being viewed as a market

36 Juan Lucena, Gary Downey, Brent Jesiek, and Sharon Elber, 'Competencies Beyond Countries: The Re-Organization of Engineering Education in the United States, Europe, and Latin America', *Journal of Engineering Education* 97 (4), October 2008: pp. 433–7.

for Australian education providers. There is also a clear awareness in Australia that Latin America has alternatives which, as shown in the tables, become more cost-effective when the Australian dollar climbs in value relative to the US dollar, British pound and Euro. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, the United Kingdom is actively and explicitly seeking to exploit its weak currency and quality universities to capture the Latin American market. When the complications and perceived insults of Australian immigration policy and the logistics of travelling between the two continents are added to the equation, Australia's hold on its Latin American market share becomes even more tenuous. The mercantilist tenor of much of the Australian educational engagement with Latin America thus emerges as a challenge in itself. Simply put, a market-based focus leaves Australia as a service provider that may be dropped at a moment's notice in favour of a more attractive option. Creating a tighter hold on the Latin American market requires deep collaborative links that will cause the relationship to be viewed in more than just financial terms: this is what international relations scholars might call complex educational interdependence. While some limited progress is being made on this front, particularly through the MOUs that the Australian Group of Eight universities are negotiating with Latin American institutions, success will ultimately depend on individual researchers working together. Making this happen is challenging and will require a level of sustained institutional and financial support that does not yet appear to be in place.

Building partnerships between Australian and Latin American educational sectors and institutions thus emerges as a central challenge, and one that is complicated by the relatively low understanding in Australia of the opportunities beyond market-share available in Latin America. As this chapter highlights, much progress has been made in building concrete inter-continental links. It is also important to note that one of the major challenges facing expanded linkages—the last remaining vestiges of Australian parochialism—appears to be slowly fading as the next generation of Australian students and businesses embark on their own exploration of the world, leaving government and the academy to play catch-up. This is being further reinforced by a similar outreach from Latin America, which is looking for new partners beyond the United States and Europe. In short, some of the pre-conditions are in place for a further expansion of Australia–Latin American education relations, but success will only come if the hard work of the last decade is continued and expanded to include genuine collaborative work based on partnership, not service provision and market exploitation.

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