

Recent Trends in International Scholarships

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of tertiary scholarships is a simple one; support a student to achieve their full academic potential with funds and other assistance. Adding an international aspect complicates the framework a little, but essentially the model remains the same. Yet behind this simple structure is a complex interplay of motivations, objectives, funding sources and outcomes. Multiple influences are expressed in scholarship programs via the design, implementation, funding and even in the closure of international scholarship programs.

Scholarship apparatus, infrastructure and policies, such as a focus on geographic areas or levels of study, can have a significant impact on gender equity and access and will impact on the outcomes the program can achieve. For example, the living allowance provided to students, and whether dependents are supported, changes the cohort of students who are attracted to the scholarship, and the cohorts and populations targeted may substantially influence final outcomes. In the past, many of these administrative decisions have been made without significant thought to the (perhaps unintended) outcomes they might create. However, as research into, and evaluation of,

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scholarships grows more sophisticated and voluminous, the impact of all policy decisions is being more closely and properly analyzed.

The bulk of international tertiary scholarships support students to study in developed countries—countries that already play host to hundreds of thousands of privately funded international students. However, there are other international scholarship programs supporting students to study in their own region or ‘South to South’ scholarships for students from developing countries to study in another developing country. These scholarship programs are challenging the asymmetrical flows of students that now dominate and are supporting the development of non-Western tertiary education systems. The development of tertiary systems in the mold set by countries such as the USA, UK, Australia and Canada, in countries like Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and elsewhere, has led to a growing debate around the value of drawing students away from their domestic system and into international study. For smaller nations, such as those in the Pacific, concerns about brain drain are real and tangible. The acceptance of the Western tradition of knowledge dissemination that these new and established higher education systems embody is not a given. Debates about the role of education in other contexts, and the role of economic power in the globalization of education, are also seen across disciplines.

This chapter will address many scholarship programs, but will have a special focus on Australia. The Australian government has funded international scholarships for more than 60 years, and international scholarships played a formative and catalytic role in the development of the international education sector that now rates as one of Australia’s most profitable exports. Australia is an important and historically significant case for examining trends in scholarship programs, but not all facets of the Australian experience are archetypal. The landscape of private foundation philanthropic scholarships, for instance, is very different in the USA than it is to Australia: although this may be changing, as will be discussed later in the chapter.

2.2 ‘STATE OF THE ART’

2.2.1 *Funders*

International scholarships are designed and implemented by a wide variety of governments, semi-state organizations, foundations and philanthropists, multilateral institutions and private companies. They provide a broad range

of awards for study at vocational, undergraduate and postgraduate level, and a small number offer awards for school level (K-12). As with the rest of this volume, this chapter will focus on tertiary-level scholarships.

Both developed and developing countries are investing heavily in scholarship programs. The Australian government has a large program of development and merit scholarships and fellowships, badged under the Australia Awards banner since 2011. While the name Australia Awards is relatively new, the Australian government has provided scholarships since at least the 1940s (Purdey 2014b), with the most historically significant program being the Colombo Plan. The Colombo Plan was a broad, pan-Commonwealth aid program that brought students from Australia's regional neighbors to Australian universities. The Plan is now seen as a pivotal point in Australia's regional history: "Australians grew more aware of and interested in Asia from the 1950s through 1970s by dint of the 20,000 sponsored and many more Asian students studying in Australia during this period" (Lowe 2015, p. 452). This is especially notable given Australia was, at the time, managing immigration through a policy known as the *White Australia Policy*. From the Colombo Plan onwards, there have been a number of iterations of these scholarships, largely focused on bringing Australia's Asia Pacific neighbors to study in Australian universities and technical colleges. The Australia Awards form a large (albeit reducing) proportion of Australia's overseas development assistance budget, with a budgeted figure of AUD360 million for the 2015–16 financial year (2016a). The changing nature of the scholarships within this budget envelope will be discussed later in this chapter.

Scholarships provided by developed nations—such as the Australia Awards or the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan—tend to focus on bringing students from other countries into the host nation for study. In this way, international scholarships become part of the funding for domestic higher education, because fees paid by scholarship funding bodies go directly to the host country institutions where awardees study, providing a source of quasi-government funding. In addition, the living allowances often counted as part of the aid budget are spent in the donor country, on rent, groceries and other amenities. Although this is at times conceptually problematic, the common goals shared by both universities and scholarship donors (especially governments) in relation to internationalizing institutions, both pedagogically and financially, can be met through these programs.

Conversely, scholarships provided by developing or mid-income countries tend to support their own citizens to study abroad. For example, the

Vietnamese Ministry of Education has implemented several ambitious educational projects, including Project 2020 which aims to rapidly increase foreign language capabilities in Vietnam and includes a goal of an additional 20,000 Vietnamese PhD graduates by 2020. This latter target has led to a rapid expansion of government scholarships provided to Vietnamese students to study on doctoral programs overseas. A number of Indonesian scholarship programs, the most common known as the DIKTI scholarships, also aim to increase the number of citizens qualified with a research degree. These programs aim to strengthen domestic higher education systems when returning scholars re-join their institutions now armed with a doctorate and thus to reduce reliance on foreign or underqualified academics. Other programs, such as the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) and other Saudi Arabian and Middle Eastern scholarship programs, are put in place to develop the skills base of the nation. While highly valued in the destination countries such as Australia, Canada, the UK and the USA, these programs infer a current shortfall in capacity and quality within domestic tertiary systems—often caused by systemic barriers to growth—that is expected to be rectified over time as students return to their home countries as qualified academics. Although very often sponsored directly by government, state-owned corporations sometimes provide targeted scholarships in accord with central government aims. For example, Qatar Petroleum, a large state-owned company in Qatar, supports the government policy of ‘Qatarization’ of the workforce by sponsoring students to undertake study overseas before returning to technical and managerial roles within the organization.

In one interesting case that does not fit the developing country mold of supporting citizens to study abroad, the government of Cuba has invested significantly in sponsoring students from developing countries, such as Ghana and Timor-Leste, to study in Cuba. Unlike many government scholarships, Cuban scholarships’ policy focuses significantly on health, a discipline in which the country has substantial domestic expertise (Lehr 2011). In the case of Timor-Leste, many students were supported to travel to Cuba and study medicine for 5 years, prior to returning to Timor-Leste as qualified doctors. Importantly, those five years were during a period of rapid change and instability in Timor-Leste, as it emerged from its war for independence and a generation of conflict. Scholarship recipients returning to their home country found that, in their absence, decisions about the official languages of the country and significant alteration in the education system and social environment had been made.

Nevertheless, these examples of ‘South to South’ scholarship programs do provide a counterbalance to issues of culturally or socially inappropriate training. This is particularly important given “the extent to which a degree obtained in a highly industrialized country is relevant to the context of the majority world has been challenged” (Lehr 2008, p. 427). Universities in many international education destination countries are under increasing pressure to ensure that all their students, domestic and international, are graduating with ‘job ready’ skills and with training that is adaptable to context. But without properly addressing the contexts of students coming from developing countries—for whom ‘job ready skills’ and adaptable training may differ substantially from peers in high-income, industrialized countries—this can lead to poor outcomes, with inappropriate contextual skills and locally relevant technical knowledge not provided.

Multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) are also becoming more involved in funding scholarship programs. The World Bank SPIRIT program was established in the late 2000s to send Indonesian students to top ranked universities for postgraduate studies. Similarly, the ADB/Japan Scholarship Program offers 300 postgraduate scholarships per year to students in developing countries from a region that stretches from Central Asia to the Pacific. These students are able to study in a number of participating institutions in Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Hawaii and, of course, Japan. As with many similar development scholarships, the program is designed to ensure students return to their home country and contribute to its social and economic development.

Another example of a scholarship program with several collaborating funders, like the ADB/Japan Scholarship Program, is the Fulbright Scholarships, funded bilaterally by the USA government and other national governments. The Fulbright Scholarships commenced bringing students to the USA immediately after the Second World War and aims to develop a greater understanding of the USA. Simultaneously, other nations support USA students to study in their own nation, providing a reciprocal program. Other large international scholarship programs are funded by private foundations, such as the Open Society Foundations, the MasterCard Foundation and the Atlantic Philanthropies, several of which are discussed in this volume.

Funding bodies have diverse and often multiple motivations for investing in what are relatively costly interventions. In the case of Australia, while the scholarships are branded as aid funding, Australia’s national interest is

arguably well served by having a large cohort of Australian-educated professionals, academics and government operatives in its region. A Senate review into public diplomacy in 2007 asserted that “the network of current and former students provides an enormous pool of people...whom...can and do assist in promoting Australia’s reputation” (Payne 2007, p. 83). In addition, the scholarships themselves form the basis of diplomatic ‘bargaining’; Australia’s temporary seat at the United Nations Security Council was in part secured by a rapid and short-lived expansion of the Australia Awards into Latin America and Africa. A significantly smaller Australia Awards Africa program still exists, but the Latin American Awards program was cut almost as soon as Australia took its seat at the Security Council. Previous research has concluded that because scholarships have been used by the Australian government in this manner, the Australia Awards fit more neatly into the realms of diplomacy rather than development (Kent 2012). With the current (2016) government, this dimension of Australian scholarships is being drawn more obviously, with politicians and bureaucrats now openly discussing the diplomatic role that the scholarships play. This is especially clear in the recently released *Australia Awards Global Strategy*, where investment priorities are to be decided on a number of factors, including the need to “...detail opportunities for Australia Awards to contribute to economic diplomacy and public diplomacy objectives” (DFAT 2016b, p. 10).

Finally, along with developing domestic capability and capacity, such as the awards provided by the Vietnamese, Indonesian and Saudi governments, scholarships can also be used by funding countries to develop their own tertiary education systems. For example, the Victorian Doctoral Scholarships, funded by the Victorian State government in Australia, are in place to attract very high caliber research students to Victoria, in the interests of boosting Victoria’s research strength. These scholarships are also used by the Victorian government as part of its ‘destination branding’ activities.

2.2.2 *Design*

Given the variety of funding bodies that offer international tertiary scholarships, the design and functioning of the scholarship programs is similarly diverse. The basics are generally the same—students are selected, placed and then supported financially through their studies. But within this basic framework, each element allows for a number of variations which in turn impact on the way in which the scholarships are put into practice.

Selection is a key area of difference between programs. Eligibility for scholarship programs is often determined based on the target institution; for example, only those who would qualify to enter the destination course are eligible for support. In scholarship programs for postgraduate study, this often creates a significant barrier to entry for those who may not have had access to undergraduate study at a reputable institution. In the Australia Awards, for example, selection is made from a pool of already elite candidates: those who are eligible for entry into an Australian university at a Masters level. An internal review commissioned by the Australian government found that “scholarship programs may inadvertently be perpetuating prejudice and inequality through selection criteria. . .” (Gosling 2009, p. 7).

In other scholarship programs, such as the large-scale program implemented by the Ministry of Education in Kuwait, students are supported to gain entry into tertiary-level study: for example, by having scholarships for foundation level programs. Language capability is also a key concern for the design of an international scholarship program, and policy changes on the time allowed for language study prior to commencing degree study can be confusing for institutions and students. Students within the KASP program, for example, have had restrictions placed on the length of time allowed for English language study; a maximum duration of approximately 1 year (50–55 weeks) has been reported informally by staff working with KASP students. This serves as another barrier to entry for many potential awardees.

Reflecting on these barriers, it becomes clear that many international scholarship programs are targeting an already elite cohort of students who are capable of study in a foreign country. This particularly includes new scholarship programs, such as the Schwarzman Scholars program, that will fund an elite cohort of students to study and be mentored by international leaders in business and politics in China for a year. While there are some scholarship programs that work to attract and support those students who are less able to access these existing opportunities, the elite nature of the Western university system creates a significant barrier.

Levels and Topics of Study

Another key element of the design of a scholarship program is the level of study supported. International scholarships deemed to be part of development programs are largely focused on postgraduate study, whereas large-scale scholarship programs from developing nations will typically support study at undergraduate levels. Previous iterations of the Australia Awards

program have also supported study at vocational colleges, particularly for recipients from sending countries where the education system was underdeveloped and there was a clear vocational skills need. This was the case in a small scholarship program between Australia and Timor-Leste, shortly after the latter achieved independence in 2001. The conflict in Timor-Leste in the preceding years had led to a situation where access to education was difficult or impossible for most Timorese. A scholarships program for this post-conflict society was therefore tailored to function despite lower levels of educational attainment and the difficulty in accessing the required proof of qualifications.

Now, however, the Australia Awards are almost entirely a postgraduate award program, regardless of the recipient country. The candidate pool for the awards is thus restricted, further entrenching the elite nature of the international scholarship program and bringing it more into line with similar programs globally. Nevertheless, this change has allowed the program to target professionals with several years of experience; more mature candidates who are sure of their academic and professional capacity. Tertiary education systems in many developing countries are also now able to teach 'world standard' undergraduate programs, and transnational education (with a developed country university delivering a course in partnership with a university in the developing world) delivery models are common, reducing the need for developed country-sponsored international undergraduate studies. Finally, and not insignificantly, supporting a student for up to 2 years of postgraduate Masters level study is less costly than supporting a student through 4 years of undergraduate study, enabling either more scholarships to be funded or, alternatively, the same number with somewhat lesser investment. This is also reflected in a reduction in the number of PhD scholarships—typically also 4 or more years—awarded through the Australia Award program.

The areas of study on which the scholarship focuses also impacts on the type of student who becomes an awardee. By restricting the area of study at the design stage, funders can more easily track impact on a specific industry or thematic area. However, while it may allow for ease of measuring impact, areas of study within the Australia Awards (which are agreed by the Australian government and the recipient country) often have the effect of constricting the candidate pool. For example, a focus on extractive industries (mining) usually leads to a higher number of male applicants. The science and technology focus of the Brazilian Scientific Mobility Program (BSMP) (see Zahler and Menino in this volume) will provide a useful study

of the impact of such a highly subject-focused program on the diversity of the future science and technology workforce in Brazil. Gender balance is a key concern for many scholarships, but is often complicated by design factors. For example, at the postgraduate level, the provision (or not) of support for accompanying families can impact on applications from female students, who are often the designated caregiver within a family. By not providing such support, the diversity of candidates will reduce; fewer applicants with dependent families apply. But the change in applicant cohort is difficult to track, and thus the outcome from the change in policy is not obvious for the policy maker and funder.

Institutional Design Factors

Decisions around placement strategy among tertiary institutions are of great importance to the design of programs. Many scholarship programs, such as the Indonesian World Bank SPIRIT program, have started out with the goal of only placing students in the top 100 ranked universities in the world. In practice this is difficult to achieve, particularly for large-scale programs with diverse applicants who may not all meet entry requirements for such institutions. Recent reports from Saudi Arabia have claimed that the KASP program will in future only place students in top 50 ranked institutions (Honeywood 2016), but given the size of the program—with more than 6000 students in Australia alone, and many thousands more in North America and other countries—this goal appears almost impossible. The motivations for this decision are not entirely clear, but student feedback about supervisors constantly changing and being otherwise unsupportive has been cited as one reason (Honeywood 2016). The reaction by the Saudi Ministry of Education potentially reflects a perception that such undesirable institutional experiences are less likely at higher-ranked institutions, and that higher-ranked institutions will lead to better outcomes for students and, by extension, Saudi Arabia.

A growing trend in scholarship design, and international education more broadly, is the role of on-award student support. The experience a student enjoys or endures is a key determinant of how they interpret their study throughout their life. It is also now a keenly felt element of the diplomatic aspect of scholarships and international education. Australia, for instance, experienced a series of racially motivated attacks on students, which moved international education to the front pages in both Australia and India (Wesley 2009) and led to questions about the role of international education in bilateral relationships. Interestingly, the establishment of a specific

Victorian Indian Doctoral scholarship was a direct outcome of this period, with the scholarship used to smooth relations with both the Indian community and government.

Increasing focus on student experience has led to the inclusion of on-award support within a number of scholarship programs. Case managers are in place to support Australia Awards students from Papua New Guinea. BSMP students in Australia are also able to seek support and assistance from specially employed staff at the Embassy in Canberra, who have provided advice on matters as diverse as health insurance and where to purchase swimwear. To perhaps underscore the importance of the issue of student experience, it is now a key element of the Australian government's National Strategy for International Education (Department of Education and Training 2016). The recognition of the role of the student experience within influential government strategy demonstrates how important the concept is to the international education sector more broadly, not just in the world of scholarship-funded students.

2.2.3 *Aims, Populations and Contexts*

The motivations and aims of scholarship programs are myriad, and the cohorts that are eligible for scholarships usually reflect the aims and design of the program. The KASP was put in place, similar to other Middle Eastern scholarship programs, to increase the capability of its citizens and to reduce the reliance on expatriate workers. Research by a KASP awardee, interviewing participants who were sponsored by the Saudi government has concluded that “higher education seems to be the magic wand that Saudi Arabia is using in order to cope with its internal and external challenges” (Hilal 2013, p. 208). The growing domestic higher education system in Saudi Arabia reflects a change in focus for the Kingdom, but the quality of the system will take generations to develop. The BSMP program, on the other hand, seeks to address what are “considered to be among the main constraints to the immediate and future development of the Brazilian society” (Knobel 2012, p. 17). The focus on science, technology and engineering is part of a design created to address a very specific problem. Whether it will meet its goals is yet to be seen, particularly as the program has been scaled back significantly after recent financial turmoil in Brazil (see Zahler and Menino).

A key goal of the Australia Awards, and many similar scholarships funded by developed nations, is the strengthening of institutional capacity abroad. In the Australia Awards, this is addressed by designing the program to work

with so-called targeted organizations, either NGOs or government departments with whom the scholarship administrators work closely. Applicants are often nominated by the organization, and the selection processes are less transparent than those for other ‘public’ applicants.

Within the goal of institutional development, an important facet of targeting that is at play within the scholarship programs is that of *critical mass*. Critical mass is where the expected impact is linked to the changing culture within organizations that comes with a ‘critical mass’ of returned scholars. A useful example of how these considerations are built into scholarship programs can be drawn from one of the largest Australia Awards programs: the Australia Awards Indonesia. There are approximately 18,000 former Australian government scholarship recipients in Indonesia (Purdey 2015, p. 111), and the targeting of organizations for selecting awardees has been “with the explicit or implicit intention of influencing workplace cultures through developing a critical mass of awardees that creates an environment open to change” (Lockley et al. 2015, p. 33). This concentration of scholarship alumni has been described as an ‘Australian mafia’ within the Indonesian bureaucracy: “a network of civil servants and professionals who have a shared experience not only of Australia, but also as beneficiaries of scholarships administered by Australian government agents and agencies” (Purdey 2015, p. 111). A recent Office for Development Effectiveness report has noted that there are a select number of workplaces in which a large concentration of alumni has changed the dynamic: however, they also observe that there are organizations where a critical mass has not catalyzed change, noting “in some of the priority organisations targeted in Jakarta, there are many Australia Awards Scholarship alumni but very few alumnae [female alumni] in leadership positions” (Lockley et al. 2015, p. 34). Other studies point to only 50 percent of awardees being promoted on return (Nugroho and Lietz 2011), calling into question the impact that a critical mass of alumni can and do have on their return.

2.2.4 *Alumni and Impact*

Within the diplomatic space, there is significant value in scholarships from a number of viewpoints. Scholarship programs can, for instance, use development relationships to facilitate diplomatic ends that might otherwise be unavailable. The Chinese Government scholarship program is a development scholarship that has significant diplomatic aspects in a manner similar to the Australia Awards. The Chinese government believes that “cultivating

future leaders of other developing countries would have far-reaching influence on the future of the relationship between China and its aid recipients” (Dong and Chapman 2008). This scholarship brings students from developing countries to China for tertiary study and simultaneously allows the Chinese government to expand its public diplomacy footprint outside of bridges, roads and power plants. But the shifting nature of the role of China in global power structures inevitably changes the way this scholarship has been perceived by students and other nation states.

The advertising of a scholarship program to a population highlights the contribution that the donor country is making and, following their return to their home country, a scholarship recipient is an ambassador with an in-depth understanding of the donor country. For those who end up in positions of influence or responsibility, there is an understanding or expectation that alumni will preference the donor country. The proportion of alumni holding influential positions is thus an often relied upon metric for the outcomes of international scholarships, particularly those funded by governments. The number of government ministers who were educated in in the donor country (e.g. Australia, the UK or the USA) is a matter of pride. Research by the British Council in 2014, for instance, boasted that “analysis suggests that the UK is ten times more likely to produce a world leader than the USA – UK universities produces one world leader per fifty thousand graduates, whereas the US produces one per five hundred thousand” (Sowula 2014, p. 1).

These easily publishable stories of international success breed a sense of pride in a tertiary education system and are likely to ensure a taxpaying citizenry is willing to pay the costs of the scholarship program. They do not, however, measure the impact that period of study had on the life of the subject (world leader or not), nor the impact on the subject’s family. Recent research conducted with alumni of Australian government scholarships from Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, conversely, has used in-depth interview methods to understand the impact of the scholarships, taking study in Australia as only a part of an alumnus’ whole of life story. The research revealed that many alumni made intellectual breakthroughs during their study, and the impact of their award on their life was enhanced if they could share their experience with their family (Lowe and Purdey 2016). The research offers a detailed insight into the multifaceted impact—including diplomatic impact—that scholarship programs can have. Perhaps most notably, however, the research was commissioned by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the only funder of Australia

Awards, and demonstrates a commitment to understanding the full story of scholarships. The challenge for DFAT, however, is how the research outcomes may be used when designing awards, particularly, as with many government programs, issues of funding are often more pressing than evidence-led design.

2.2.5 *Money and Politics*

Recent crises—the global financial crisis, the Arab Spring and its aftermath, the Syrian and Iraq wars, and massive falls in the price of oil and other commodities—have all impacted on the size and sustainability of scholarship programs. Following the fall of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, for instance, students sponsored by the Libyan government were left stranded across the world with no living allowances and tuition fees unpaid. The uncertainty and financial risks that this exposed, both for the students and their host institutions, was an extreme lesson in the impact of geopolitics in the world of international education.

Recent changes in the economic fortunes of funding nations have severely impacted on the size of several large programs, such as those funded by the Brazilian and Saudi Arabian governments. Malaysia, another nation heavily dependent on oil revenues, has significantly scaled back its international tertiary scholarship scheme, focusing more heavily on scholarships for Malaysian students to study in domestic universities. These examples—and the experiences of other, particularly oil-producing, nations (Ortiz 2016)—demonstrate the difficulties of establishing the administrative infrastructure that is needed to support a large scholarship program when faced with a fluctuating and uncertain financial base.

In the case of the Saudi scholarship program, the first step of ‘rationalizing’ the program has been to restrict new students in the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) to very highly ranked universities (Honeywood 2016). The steps that have led KASP to this decision are myriad. Firstly, and as noted above, the Saudi Ministry of Education may have become increasingly concerned about quality issues with supervisory relationships among the range of institutional hosts (Honeywood 2016). Secondly, the scale of the program is enormous: “Over 207,000 students and dependents took advantage of the King Abdullah Scholarship Program to go abroad in 2014, at a cost of some 22.5 billion riyals (\$6 billion), according to government data” (Paul 2016, p. 1). The number of Saudi students who complete their undergraduate or postgraduate degree

overseas is high, and many spend 5 years overseas to complete both an undergraduate degree and English language training. Students receive very high stipends, and the infrastructure of support services, managed through Saudi Arabian Cultural Missions across the world, is massive and costly.

It may well be that these recent changes signal the natural end of these particular scholarship programs. The domestic higher education system of Malaysia is now much stronger than it was, and Malaysia is now selling itself as a destination country for international students. In Saudi Arabia, there are new universities being built and a tertiary education system developing. Even in the Australian context, budget constraints have severely impacted on the number of long-term Australia Awards being offered. As the funding is spread across a number of recipient countries, and tied up in the Australian overseas development assistance budget, the cuts are uneven. The 2015 budget included a 70 percent cut to aid to Africa and a massive cut to the scale of the Australia Awards Africa program. Even the Australia Awards Indonesia program was cut by up to 40 percent (Nicholson 2015).

Yet while these cuts to budgets led to fewer long-term scholarships being awarded, the political demand for ‘numbers’ of Australia Award students remains strong. This has led to a rapid growth in short course awards: non-award programs, often only few weeks in length, that focus on specific skill sets, such as leadership training. These changes have caused great disquiet among Australian universities, which have come to rely on the steady stream of quality postgraduate students that the Australia Awards provides, both from a revenue perspective and because these students boost the overall quality of the study body. The program alumni are, of course, also useful from a marketing standpoint. In most recipient countries, the Australia Awards are a prestigious and well-regarded scholarship, and returned alumni play a valuable role in promoting their universities within the community. In addition, the continued connections that are created throughout an awardee’s period of study work to support the mission of a university in internationalization and social responsibility.

When it comes to ensuring impact, the change to shorter periods of study for awards is significant. Recent research by Lowe et al. (2015), for instance, has concluded that longer study periods overseas tend to create greater impact on students. Obviously a number of factors are at play in this—including the impact that the particular course of study may have on an individual—but the distinction between short- and long-term engagement is vital. Research with students who have had experience of study abroad (not in a scholarship context) supports this contention. When a cohort of

students were asked to reflect on their experiences while they were studying overseas, they were able to “demonstrate the transformative and enriching potential of sustained intercultural interaction” (Welsh 2015, p. 152).

With the reduction in funding from governments, the role of private philanthropy and foundations in providing international scholarships may play a greater role. In Australia, for instance, there has been a significant change to the philanthropic landscape. The Atlantic Philanthropies funded a scholarship program for Vietnamese students to study in Australia between 2000 and 2006 and have recently announced that they will be supporting a fellowship program that “will build the capability of a new generation of leaders committed to advancing a fairer, healthier, more resilient and inclusive society in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific” (Scott 2016, p. 1). While this fellowship program will initially target indigenous scholars in Australia, it is expected that it will later also involve scholars from the Pacific. Elsewhere, large private foundations have also been making large investments in scholarship programs: the MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program, discussed later in this volume (see Burciul and Kerr), is a recent example among several.

2.2.6 *Institutions Versus Individuals*

Students who receive scholarships to undertake tertiary study overseas, regardless of the funding source, are provided with an opportunity for a life-changing experience. Education can catalyze change and development, both for individuals and communities. However, if the best and the brightest of a nation’s tertiary system are plucked out, and placed overseas, the quality of that system is reduced. There is also an assumption, especially in those programs with requirements for students to return home to their country to support the development of the economy and society that their experience will be of value to that country.

Many, but not all, international education programs assume positive outcomes without significant evidence to support that assumption (Kent 2012). In the Australian government scholarship program, for students who return to their home country “. . . it is imagined that the mere presence of these knowledge-enhanced individuals will somehow produce all kinds of benefits, including outcomes such as better governance, more political stability and a superior climate for globally-driven economic investment” (Nilan 2005, p. 161). Investing the funds spent on a scholarship program directly into tertiary systems ‘in country’ may lead to better educational

outcomes. Nilan has argued that the vast bulk of the funds spent on Australian government scholarships for Indonesian students program should “instead be paid into Indonesian universities through in-country support for education, including internal scholarships” (2005, p. 175).

Investing directly in institutions would not, however, match the myriad other motivations wrapped up in international scholarship programs. By exerting control over the design of scholarship programs, funders can more easily control the outcomes of their investment. And the desired outcomes, as has been discussed in this chapter, are many and varied. Scholarship programs are designed to lead to diplomatic outcomes, to encourage cultural exchange, to reduce the reliance on expatriate workers in a nation, to be part of an effort to grow soft power and are, in many cases, designed to support the educational aspirations of gifted and talented students who would otherwise be unable to progress.

2.3 CONCLUSION

Recent trends in international tertiary scholarships have shown shifting priorities across a number of large funders. A move to higher-ranked institutions seemingly indicates a growing focus on quality outcomes, but may in fact represent the shrinking funding available to many sponsors. This reduction in funding is also leading to a focus on shorter study programs, in place of long degree programs. However, research on the impact of scholarships and study abroad has suggested that the move to short-term programs is likely to have a deleterious effect on program outcomes. More positively, funders are embracing the concept of on-award support, seeing the value in high-quality study experiences. This development is in line with a broader recognition of the role of a positive student experience in supporting the growth and sustainability of international education. When designing new scholarship programs, design features that embrace principles of access and equity are required to ensure the best outcomes for students, and these principles should be front of mind during the development of scholarship programs.

As the variety of authors contributing to this book clearly demonstrates, scholarship programs sit in an undefined academic space, somewhere between development, education and public diplomacy. They are studied across faculties or by interdisciplinary researchers. It is perhaps this undefined space that has allowed for scholarships to remain relatively

under-researched, although this is changing: international students and the role they play in the world of foreign relations is “not a terrain of neat paths and well-trodden methodologies, but it seems to have dawned as a field of study” (Lowe 2015, p. 449). Setting aside the measurement of the development objectives espoused by many scholarship programs, there is at least a greater need to understand and quantify the soft power outcomes that scholarships can bring (Guang 2016). Nevertheless, there is a growing body of research to support the contention that studying overseas contributes not only to an individual but also to their family and community. An investigation of the outcomes of international education in Australia found that “. . . students who return home have become more complex members of their own society as their reintegration into their home country requires them to integrate the experiences, values and knowledge gained from their overseas study with the experience of being and working at home” (Cuthbert et al. 2008, p. 265). In this complexity there is value.

As global flows of students increase, the role of international scholarships in the broader international education macrocosm may become reduced. In numerical terms, scholarship-funded students are but a drop in an ocean of globally mobile students. But for developing countries, and populations where access to high-quality tertiary education is limited (although that is a highly subjective notion), scholarships are often the only available path to higher education. It is crucial, therefore, for sponsors and funders to be cognizant of how a scholarship program’s design impacts on access to it and also outcomes from it. International development scholarships can, when not appropriately designed, entrench elites within already stratified societies. Scholarship funders are now able to access increasing amounts of research and data about the outcomes of awardees and how policies within a scholarship program affect academic progression or broader societal impact. It is incumbent on these scholarship bodies, particularly governments, to recognize this research and integrate its findings into their program designs.

Recent political and financial crises have highlighted the fragility of some large scholarship programs. The uncertainty caused among student bodies and their host institutions can be detrimental to both individual students’ outcomes and bilateral relationships. There are challenges to be addressed by funders, and the host tertiary education systems, to ensure that learners are not severely impacted when conflict or political turmoil occurs in their home country. As many organizations and governments have discovered, scholarships are neither cheap nor easy to administer, and the return on investment is difficult to measure, yet governments increasingly demand

measurable returns on investments. The mere assumption of positive outcomes from educational programs like scholarships is increasingly difficult to justify. Scholarship outcomes are not immediate, and understanding the impact of scholarships requires maintaining contact with awardees long after their scholarship is completed. Keeping focused on long-term outcomes is difficult for funding organizations, particularly governments, as priorities shift across short electoral and budget cycles.

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