



# Leadership in international education: leaders' professional development needs and tensions

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## Abstract

This paper explores the professional development needs of leaders in response to emergent demands for leadership and competing pressures within the changing landscape of Australian international education. Framed within Bourdieu's concepts of field and habitus, this study addresses five dimensions of professional development needs reported by leaders in international education: understanding of and skills to work across cultural differences, knowledge of and expertise to respond to policy changes and emergent trends, leadership and management skills targeted for internationalisation, networking and relationship management skills to work with increasingly diverse and 'non-traditional' stakeholders and research skills. However, the social field in which these leaders are functioning is causing tensions for their continuing professional development, including existing institutional governance and structures, financial constraints and the institutional culture that has not put internationalisation on the top of institutional development agenda. The study indicates a critical need for tackling obstacles and supporting sustainable situated professional learning for these leaders so as to enhance their capacities and impact as key players in international education. This study provides empirical and theoretical insights for institutions involved in international education to build effective policies and practices for enhancing professional development for the sustainable international education leadership.

**Keywords** International education · Professional development · Social field and habitus · Leaders' needs · Tensions

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## Introduction

The landscape of international education across the globe is constantly changing, increasingly politically exposed (Marginson 2018) and ‘frequently turbulent in a public policy sense and increasingly business focused’ (Murray et al. 2014, p. 17). International education is framed by different social, economic and political factors. The broader context of internationalisation is characterised by emerging internationalisation trends, government strategies for internationalisation, changing student market, government visa regulations, migration and post-study work policies, transnational education partnership models, the development of technology and the emergence of offshore online international education. Also, the paths for internationalisation have shifted from an ad hoc to a strategic agenda, a proactive to an active process, and from a value-added to a core mainstream activity (de Wit 2015; Hudzik 2014; Hudzik and Stohl 2012). International education has taken place in various forms such as international student mobility, exchange of faculties and students, transnational education, research collaboration, internationalisation of the curriculum and embedment of foreign elements in local programs (Beelen and Jones 2015; Gao, 2015; Tran and Marginson 2018). Its focuses also change through time, with four major developmental waves; (i) delineation of central components of internationalisation in HE (1997–2001), (ii) institutionalisation and management of internationalisation (2002–2006), (iii) consequences of internationalisation: student needs and support structures (2007–2011) and (iv) moving from the institutional to the transnational context of internationalisation (2012–2016) (Bedenlier et al. 2018, p. 108). In short, the nature, drive, scope and process of internationalisation have transformed.

The changing and complex landscape of internationalisation has posed a pressing need for leaders, who are critical to driving and shaping institutional internationalisation, to develop new capacities, knowledge and skills beyond their traditional expertise. While international education activities represent a subset of the internationalisation agenda, the roles of international education leaders may vary. Senior leaders often have responsibility for all aspects of internationalisation within their institution or faculty while middle-level leaders are often in charge of their specific portfolios, for example, study-abroad programmes, international student support programmes or transnational education programmes. While research on international education has largely captured the perspectives and experiences of students and teachers, the voices of leaders are less heard. Even though a small body of literature is concerned with leaders’ activities, challenges and motivations in internationalisation (Heyl and Tullbane 2012; Murray et al. 2014; Egron-Polak et al. 2010), there is still a critical lack of research that addresses the interaction between their professional development (PD) needs and the environment in which they are operating. Understanding leaders’ PD needs is critical to provision of effective support for them and therefore for the sustainability of the international education sector.

This paper responds to this critical gap by exploring the perspectives of 30 leaders on their PD needs within the context of Australian international education. The paper is drawn from a research project which included 215 interviews, field notes and observations of PD activities of leaders, teachers, and professionals in international education. In this study, “international education leaders” mainly refer to middle-level leaders in charge of specific internationalisation portfolios, ranging from Institution’s International Student Office, International Mobility Office, Transnational Education Office to Faculty’s International Portfolio. Using Bourdieu’s concepts of social fields and habitus, the analysis shows that international education leaders hold a variety of PD needs. Unfortunately, the social field in which these

leaders are functioning is not particularly favourable for their continuing PD, due to the existing institutional governance and management structures, research-focused culture, relationship between academic and professional staff, and a number of practicality issues in organising these PD activities. As such, the study reveals a contradiction between internationalisation positioned within public discourse and internationalisation positioned through PD provision to leaders. On the one hand, internationalisation is evidenced to be crucial to institutional development and should be comprehensive and integral to institutional development strategies instead of an “add-on” (see Heyl and Tullbane 2012; Hudzik 2014). On the other hand, PD for international education leaders, who are key players in institutional internationalisation, continues to be marginalised due to various structural conditions. The empirical and theoretical insights gained from this study are beneficial for institutions involved in international education to build effective policies and practices for enhancing PD for sustainable international education leadership.

### Leadership in the social field of international education

There is a plethora of literature that examines the phenomenon of internationalisation in tertiary education over the past few decades. The majority of research tends to unpack the complexity of the internationalisation phenomenon through five primary dimensions:

- Examining the rationales, nature, strategy and operation of internationalisation (e.g. de Wit 2015; Hudzik 2014; Knight 2004; Marginson and van der Wende 2006).
- Exploring the internationalisation of the curriculum and internationalisation at home (e.g. Beelen and Jones 2015; Leask 2015; Jones and Killick 2013).
- Analysing inbound and outbound mobility including mobility of students and staff, mobility of programs and projects (e.g. Dall'Alba and Sidhu 2015; Daly 2011; Deakin 2013; Tran 2016; Tran et al. 2019).
- Investigating the international student experience including their motivations, learning, engagement, intercultural and linguistic development, identity, employment and security (e.g. Heng 2019; Kettle 2005; Tran 2011; Tran and Soejatminah 2016).
- Researching offshore and transnational education (e.g. Coleman 2003; Kosmützky and Putty 2016; McBurnie and Zigras 2014).

However, amidst such intensive research in internationalisation, less attention has been devoted to the issue of leadership in internationalisation as well as the perceptions, motivations, and capacity development of international leaders despite their critical roles in internationalisation. The lack of research on the leadership role in institutional internationalisation has been pointed out by Maringe (2009). Furthermore, leadership, academic staff engagement, policy support, and finance are identified as essential enablers of a successful internationalisation process (Nolan and Hunter 2012). Directors and managers are at the forefront of implementing institutional internationalisation activities. How these leaders have participated in and have learnt throughout the process of internationalisation is crucial to comprehensive internationalisation (Hudzik and Stohl 2012), a new paradigm, which is argued to encompass ‘broadly shared commitments to a widening scope of international programs and activities’ and touch ‘the entire higher education enterprise’ (p. 66).

There is a small body of literature on internationalisation leadership which largely focuses on leadership agenda, skills and needs (de Wit 2018; Heyl and Tullbane 2012; Middlehurst 2008; Murray et al. 2014), leaders’ motivations (Yemini et al. 2015) and obstacles facing leaders in internationalisation (Murray et al. 2014). De Wit (2018) points out a transformation

from fragmented to comprehensive leadership for internationalisation. How to achieve an alignment across leadership, management, administration and governance is identified as a significant challenge for institutional efforts in internationalisation (Middlehurst 2008). Examining college directors in Israel, Yemini et al. (2015) position leaders as key agents in institutional internationalisation, arguing that their motivations for initiating institutional internationalisation process are largely driven by their personal characteristics and contextual factors. Heyl and Tullbane's research (2012) identifies essential skills for senior international officers including entrepreneurship, cross-cultural collaboration skills and proactive skills needed for the internationalisation of campus and student learning. Murray et al.'s (2014) study frames leadership needs from a different lens, focusing mainly on the aspect of 'role' rather than 'skill' that leaders need to develop while Heyl and Tullbane's (2012) research is mainly concerned with the latter. Murray et al.'s (2014) work on international education leaders in Australia and Europe finds that they undertake different roles in internationalisation, including 'innovator', 'broker', 'monitor', 'coordinator' and 'director'. Interestingly, the research found that while European international education leaders identify the need for enhancing change management, communication and research capabilities as being most critical, their Australian counterparts stress the importance of strengthening business skills and relationship management both externally as well as within the institution, especially with academic staff (Murray et al. 2014). Focusing on the growing cohort of scholar-practitioners, Streitwieser and Ogden (2016) contribute to the debate on the complex phenomenon of internationalisation by indicating the role of leadership in capitalising on the experiential knowledge and professional skills of scholar-practitioners to enhance internationalisation activities. Against the backdrop of the changing nature of internationalisation in HE, de Wit (2012) calls for more attention to understand how the roles of leaders in the field of international education may be affected.

A number of authors have argued for the need to view internationalisation as a core mission of the institution, rather than an 'add on' activity, to ensure its sustainability and success (Curtis 2013; de Wit 2015, 2018; Hudzik and Stohl 2012). They stress the importance of internationalisation being widely integrated into all dimensions and functions of the university. At the same time, this means the professional landscape for international education leaders is becoming more complex and challenging as they need to work across boundaries within the institutions and corporate with a wide range of professional groups. Curtis (2013) argues that the real challenge for international education senior managers 'is not one of managing resources within his or her international office, but rather to marshal arguments, assemble delivery mechanisms and spend resources wisely across and beyond the university' (p. 47). Also there is a need for international education leaders to develop capacities to mitigate risks that might arise from partnerships and collaborations both externally and within the university. As Curtis pointed out in his analysis of a legal guide for international partnerships, 'these risks are amplified by the increasing number of university staff involved in international partnerships and by the complexities of less familiar environments' (Curtis 2013, p. 45).

## The theoretical framework: Bourdieu's concepts of field and habitus

This study employs Bourdieu's theory of social practice as analytical constructs and uses key concepts of 'field' and 'habitus' to examine the professional development (PD) needs of international education leaders as well as how they utilised resources available for their PD.

Central to Bourdieu's theory of social practice is the concept of social field (Bourdieu 1998). Bourdieu (1998) conceptualises society as being constructed by different social fields defined by their own structures and characteristics. A field is a structured system of social positions that are occupied by either individuals or institutions. The nature of this structured system of social positions defines the situations for their occupants. It "consists of a set of objective historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital)" (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, p. 16). These positions stand in relationship of domination, subordination or equivalence (homology) to each other by virtue of access to the goods or resources (capitals) which are at stake in the field (Jenkins 2002, p. 85). In order for a field to function, besides the stakes, there have to be "people prepared to play the game, endowed with the habitus that implies knowledge and recognition of the immanent laws of the field, the stakes, and so on" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 72). Within this study, the notion of field is used to conceptualise how Australia's international education as a social field is constructed by different logics and practices and how characteristics of the social field of international education landscape shape leaders' PD needs. This sociological perspective is highly relevant to the context of international education but to date, it has not been adopted to bring light to the competing demands that characterise the field of leader PD in international education and the conditions that constrain or foster international education leaders' PD habitus. Habitus and field have a close connection with each other, as discussed further below.

Habitus, a key notion in Bourdieu's work, offers a useful lens to interpret international education leader's aspiration for developing understandings and skills relevant to their work roles. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) define habitus as a set of schemes, generated by particular conditions that influence the ways individuals think and act (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Habitus is considered as "the learned set of preferences or dispositions by which a person orients to the social world" (Dumenden and English 2013, p. 1080) or 'functions, at the level of the individual agent, as the organising principle of the agent's action' (Edgerton and Roberts 2014, p. 195). According to Bourdieu (1990), habitus is "a system of durable and transposable dispositions that mediates the actions of an individual and the external conditions of production" (p. 53). In this study, the PD needs of international education leaders are part of their habitus because these needs represent their in-seeking dispositions that will help them carry out their work roles more effectively within the changing landscape of Australian international education.

For Bourdieu, habitus is generated by particular conditions that influence the ways individuals think and act (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Habitus entails the embodiment of social practices, the result of exposure to particular experiences within any given field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). It is the accumulation of familial and personal experiences over time and can influence the ways individuals thinks and act in a certain social context embodiment of social practices, the result of exposure to particular experiences within any given field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). At the same time, through a process of actively interrogating their circumstances, individual actors are able to bring to bear forms of analysis which enable them to better understand their situation and circumstances, thereby potentially transforming these circumstances, (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), i.e. making changes to the field in which they are functioning. However, this would require individuals of capacity to play the game, "feel for the

game” to perform in particular ways, align oneself with the “tastes” of the field, or have agency while also to be shaped by circumstance both materially and socially (Bourdieu 1990, p. 166).

Habitus is therefore instrumental for understanding how leaders in international education, as social actors, develop a feel for the ‘rules of the game’ in their workplace. In this study, habitus is adapted for use in the context of PD for leaders in international education and is seen to be associated with not only how and what the leaders articulate their PD needs but also the ways international leaders utilised different forms of capital to realise the needs. In Bourdieu’s term, if there is a harmony between leaders’ habitus and the institutional international education environment, they can be described as ‘fish in water’. However, if there is dissonance between leaders’ PD habitus and their environment, they may struggle to develop a feel for the rules of the game and may exercise agency to seek out targeted PD that can support them in their professional environment. Therefore, in the study, PD habitus is understood not only as a set of schemes conditioned by their familial and personal experiences but also the factors and demands for situated professional learning arising from their specific roles in international education that may lead to possible habitus restructuring or modification.

## The research

This article draws on a larger research project funded by the Australian Research Council. The research examines the professional learning needs and practices of teachers and professional staff in Australian tertiary education sector. We targeted a variety of Australian tertiary institutions to increase the number of participants, especially leaders of international education programs, which would help increase the robustness of the findings. The data includes semi-structured interviews, observation and field notes with 215 teachers, academics, professional staff and leaders. This article focuses on the views of 30 leaders participating in this research. The participants were recruited based on their leadership position publicised on their institutional or organisational website. Short invitation letters were sent to the identified prospective participants, including the leaders, with a brief explanation about the study and a confirmation that their identity and organisations will be kept confidential and anonymous. Then the plain language statement and consent form were provided once they expressed their initial agreement to participate.

In this article, we feature the interaction between international education leaders’ PD needs and the social field they are working in. It will particularly answer the following research questions:

1. What kind of professional development do international education leaders need? Why?
2. How does the current Australian international education context affect the fulfilment of their needs?

The analysis in this article is concerned mainly with the interview data from all 30 managers and directors of international programs involved in the study. The participants, 11 males and 19 females, are from nine tertiary education institutions, and four other organisations that are involved in providing international education consultancy. With the exception of three senior leaders, most participants are middle-level leaders in charge of the International Office, Mobility Office or International Education Portfolio of their Faculty or organisation. They were recruited by email which informed them of the purpose of the study, their roles and how

their identity would be protected. In this paper, the participants are coded from P01 to P30, and their organisations are kept anonymous.

The interviews aimed to explore the variety of issues related to international education leaders' PD. During the interviews, a list of open-ended questions was used to engage individual leaders with a process where they uncovered and reflected on their professional practices and professional learning needs, as well as made connections with the contextual factors shaping their professional needs and practices. The researchers asked a key question related to a specific theme and based on the leaders' responses; the researcher provided more impromptu questions. All interviews, which lasted from 30 to 60 min, were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

For the purpose of this article, the researchers only drew on data about leaders' PD needs, as well as hindrances to their participation in or intention to take part in PD activities. The issue of how leaders exercise agency and take initiatives in engaging in PD will be discussed in another paper, due to the complexity of the topic and word limit of this paper. We used a qualitative content analysis approach, which is a common method of analysing written, verbal or visual communication messages to systematically and objectively describe a phenomenon (see Elo and Kyngäs 2008), to analyse the data. As the topic of international education leaders' professional needs has not been adequately investigated before, and related literature is still fragmented, the data were analysed inductively, as suggested by Elo and Kyngäs (2008). The researchers read each of the interview transcripts several times and openly coded interview data using NVivo version 10. The analysis aimed to identify emergent themes and patterns. The process was repeated for all 30 transcripts, then the themes and patterns were gathered and classified based on their similarities and differences. As discussed above, Bourdieu's (1998) concepts of social field and habitus (in this case, the fields of tertiary education, international education and institutional context) were used as the lens to highlight the tensions that international education leaders were facing in seeking PD opportunities and discuss the consequences that these tensions may cause to leaders' behaviours. The discussion of data that follows is centred around five dimensions of professional development needs reported by the leader participants: cross-cultural relationship management competence, updated knowledge about changes in policy and practice of international education in Australia and overseas and capabilities to respond to policy changes, situated leadership and management skills for internationalisation, interpersonal skills to work with increasingly diverse stakeholders and research skills.

### **International education leaders' needs for professional development**

International education leaders in this study were undertaking different work roles in their organisations. Many of them were performing leadership and management duties only whereas several others were concurrently undertaking teaching duties. Both groups expressed their needs of PD in the following five dimensions.

First, the majority of participants agreed that the field of Australian international education is becoming more complex and rapidly changing. Compared with a decade ago, international student cohorts and staff are more diverse, hold different expectations and require different types of support. Increased competition in international education also requires them to outsource and network with people in other countries to recruit students or deliver their courses offshore. Therefore, participants acknowledged the importance of improving their understanding of cultural differences and cross-cultural relationship management skills in order to improve the effectiveness of their work in the field of international education, which partially reflected findings about cross-cultural collaboration for senior international officers in Heyl and Tullbane's (2012) study. Their views can be illustrated as below:

I think cultural sensitivities as well as PD that widen up the context of training and education of Australia in the world would be something that leaders should actually have. (P27, female, other education organisation)

Cultural awareness [...] is a big one for us now that we've been pushing pretty hard, it also affects all the other international departments within [name of the institution]. So we are liaising with the International Department to deliver this training. (P15, male, vocational education)

Secondly, closely connected to the first dimension, some leaders believed that they and their colleagues would need to be regularly updated with knowledge about the current context of international education in Australia and in other countries. This, to them, was to respond to policy changes, anticipate the future and develop their expertise accordingly because Australian international education is increasingly subject to competition from other Western and Asian counterparts. They also believed that providing PD in this area would help update the mindset of senior international education leaders about what the field of international education is like at present. All of these together would be helpful for the sustainable development of Australian international education.

The imperial mindset still prevails to an extent and people need to understand that the world is no longer the same 30, 40 years back when Australia, UK or US are not meeting with many competition or challenges. Whereas today we realise that a lot of Asian countries are up coming and they will be challenging the Australia. So we really need to catch up fast and be mindful about that. (P27, female, other education organisation)

I think our sector's constantly changing [...]. So from a PD point of view, I find that you are always being challenged of what's happening next [...]. My own development is trying to keep across of that and there is so much going on. [...]. Policy change is one of the biggest things. I mean, we just cannot underestimate how big that policy change can be and turn our industry upside down in a good or a bad way overnight. (P28, female, other education organisation)

Thirdly, participants reported that in the complex changing landscape of Australian and the worldwide international education, they needed support to develop their leadership skills, management skills and expertise targeted for internationalisation. As the result of the growing mobility of tertiary education staff, many academics had taken international education leadership positions for the first time or undertook them alongside their academic role. Therefore, it required them to proactively participate in PD opportunities in order to get a better understanding of the field, their current work roles, and expectations of stakeholders that they may work with.

...What I mean would be important to keep myself up to date about the industrial standards as well as what is going on in the university environment with regards to training and education. [...]. The only chance for PD I think would be good and relevant would be a little bit more on leadership training. (P27, female, other education organisation)

Consistent with findings in Murray et al. (2014), experienced leaders also believed that they and their staff members needed to upgrade leadership and management skills due to the fact



that staff and students in the field of international education are increasingly diverse. They reported that they needed skills to deal with diverse stakeholders in their work units, in other departments and outside the institutions in order to resolve issues related to international education. Some of them associated their needs in this regard to the fact that they had to mentor new staff and new leaders. Others referred to the necessities of strengthening the relationships between tertiary education institutions and related stakeholders, for example employers, professional organisations and government agencies, as a premise for their leadership and management skills development needs. A leader expressed the needs of developing leadership for international education staff as below:

There is a leadership issue around professionalisation of staff overall, isn't there, and it includes people in international education. So your university leaders and executives have got to be supportive and they've got to provide the requirements whether it's time off, whether it's, even funding (P30, male, other education organisation)

Fourthly, in order to develop their leadership and management skills efficiently, the majority of participants voiced their needs for networking with colleagues and stakeholders. Networking, in their perspectives, was not restricted to their institutions or Australia but may expand to other countries and to the virtual worlds. They suggested conferences, travels, discussion forums, participation in committees and special interest groups as opportunities for PD and networking. Networking not only benefited them in terms of developing concrete knowledge and skills but also offered collaboration opportunities to improve the quality of international education, such as organising relevant work placements for international students.

... all people in leadership positions must have contacts outside their organisation to be able to grow their organisation, otherwise you are so busy looking inwards you don't what's happening in the big wide world out there. (P11, male, higher education)

Our contacts are pretty good peer to peer, so our collaborations with other institutes, international institutions, other universities abroad are strong. What needs to be stronger is the non-university, the businesses, the companies, industries, NGOs, governments, everything else, and that's what we need, that, we've got to play catch up with that. And develop much more established and sustainable networks of employment, employer opportunities for our international students. (P25, male, vocational education)

Finally, many participants from higher education institutions mentioned that they needed PD to enhance their research competence, including identifying knowledge gaps, understanding and analysing data and using research evidence to influence institutional and government policies in internationalisation. Many leaders and staff who are working in international education are pursuing or have obtained a Ph.D or have been academics prior to commencing their current leadership roles in international education; therefore, doing research is part of their professional identity. A leader elaborated the needs and benefits of participating in research-related activities as below:

When I first started to publish, I didn't quite appreciate how it was developing me as a leader. But when you start to publish on a topic you become, you become seen as a bit of a topic expert and you then are asked [for] your opinion in many different circumstances. So that means I try to keep myself now, even when I'm not publishing, on a particular topic, I maintain an interest in the topic and I try to keep myself informed and up to date. (P13, female, higher education)

In short, Australian international education leaders needed PD in five dimensions: understanding and skills related to cultural differences, capabilities to respond to policy changes and develop effective plans accordingly, targeted leadership and management skills for internationalisation, networking and relationship management skills to work with diverse stakeholders in international education, and research competence. Despite differences, their needs seemed to derive from a common motive to better perform their current and future work duties within the changing landscape of Australian international education sector.

### **Tensions in the current social field for international education leaders' professional development**

The analysis revealed that the social field in which international education leaders are functioning was not very favourable for their PD. Three major tensions were identified: existing institutional governance and structures, the research-focused culture that has not put internationalisation on the top of institutional development agenda and financial constraints.

#### **Existing institutional governance and structures**

Participants suggested that in many Australian tertiary institutions, existing institutional governance structures hindered their PD. First, the seniority-preference governance structure seemed to hand power over to senior academics, who were less open to change in several participants' opinion. Participants reported that only key staffs at top management level were involved in the decision-making process. This prevented some devoted non-academic leaders, who were at the low-level management position, from raising their voice of international education issues that they found urgent to address. Neither did it allow new leaders at this level to have an overview of their institutional strategic visions and missions as well as understand how international education are evolving. This gradually caused many of them to feel disregarded and incompetent in their role.

I think it's really important that you are seen to have an input into whether it's how the university's run, how internationals run, whatever it might be but more importantly it's important that you know someone is listening rather than well I've got a voice, I could just be whinging and whining constantly. (P11, male, higher education)

Another problem with this seniority-preference governance structure is that senior academics, who often undertook important roles in their institutions, usually refrained from PD activities. A leader attributed this non-participation to the conservative mindset of senior academics. He considered it an obstacle for PD activities in international education. He associated this non-participation with creating inertia for innovating practices in international education. The worst thing was they could have set a role model for younger academics and staff to follow.

Look, to be honest I don't think it's so much of an issue for younger academics. That the challenge is for older academics who don't, well, the older senior people don't really have any interest in learning new things, many of them. I mean some do and that's impressive. The younger staff are more open to ideas, they're more interested in teaching [...]. Where the senior staff are modelling very damaging attitudes and that becomes, that's very hard to shift. (P01, male, higher education)

In the same vein, the existing management structure of the international education field was also found to inhibit PD for leaders and staff. The international education workforce was diverse and appointed across different departments or units within an institution. Beside the leaders, teaching staff, administrative professionals, and student support staff, many of whom were on a casual contract, had to collaboratively operate the education export sector. Therefore, coupled with a lack of resources, as reported below, allocating relevant types of PD activities to all of these staff was difficult. Consequently, some groups of staff and some PD activities were prioritised over others. This finding echoed the argument in Curtis (2013) that the real challenge for international education senior managers now is to spend resources wisely across and beyond the university (p. 47).

So the challenge in dealing with that is how to distribute the opportunity amongst people who are engaged in international education and on what basis should those opportunities be distributed? Some roles need more than others perhaps and some roles there's more obvious connections between the PD opportunities that are out there and what they're actually doing on a day to day basis as an example. [...]. The people are at different points in their career, they're at different points in their PD needs. It's hard to make a blanket rule about this. (P13, female, higher education)

It really depends on the role and what is required from the role really. Full-time staff would probably have more opportunities because they're a part. But for casual staff we'll be looking at, you know, their role and if it is required, we'll definitely be looking at offering it. (P19, female, vocational education)

The cross-department nature of work in the international education field often resulted in non-collaboration between staff. Participants observed that the separation between academic and non-academic staff in international education was still high.

[There is a lack of] cross-fertilisation between, you know, professional and academic staff. [...]. You know, if we want to improve, say, the student experience with our students offshore, they have to work with us because we have to work with the partner to implement whatever new things have to be implemented. [...] I think it's always a little bit of *a them and us kind of divide which is a pity*, you know. (P09, female, higher education)

One of the key challenges pointed out here is that in the international education field, it requires collaboration between both academic and non-academic staff across units within an institution to operate the service or run international education programs effectively. A lack of collaboration between the two groups would result in fragmented implementation of international education programs and reduce opportunities for PD through peer-learning. Unfortunately, the division between academics and professional staff is a significant barrier in reality even though both parties are involved in and committed to improving their institution's international education programs.

In short, the existing governance and management structures in Australian tertiary education institutions limited young, low-level international education leaders to have PD for their growth and contribution. Meanwhile, it allowed senior leaders to remain with the old mindset about international education and slowed down the adaptation of their institutions to changes in the field of international education. The cross-department

nature of work in international education field also encouraged non-collaboration among leaders and staff as well as complicated PD organization and their participation. All of these may have discouraged many of them to actively seek for opportunities to enhance their leadership capacities for international education.

### **A research-focused institutional culture**

Following the current governance and management structure, the research-focused institutional culture, especially in HE, was found to negatively impact on PD of international education leaders. Several participants reported that HE institutions invested in developing research capacity for academic staff more often than in professional skills development for non-academic staff. In their observation, this research-focused institutional culture encouraged academics involved in international education to participate in research-related PD events and tended to avoid those related to international education administration and teaching.

I think it's, in general the academics won't really go [to PD events related to working with professionals in internationalisation] unless they can see research points out of it...[...]. The other problem is the prioritisation of research performance which really encourages lots of academics both here and at the research-intensive universities to try and spend as little time as necessary on their teaching and to spend as much time and energy as they can on their research. (P01, male, higher education)

One reason that my colleague left was because she couldn't actually get any research funding as a professional within the institution. [...]. So she, you know, and she didn't want to lose that ability to be able to keep doing research and publishing, which if the longer she stayed here, the longer it would've been a problem. (P09, female, higher education)

Participants acknowledged that there were some types of PD activities available in their institutions or organised by an external international education body such as the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA). This included formal workshops or seminars, new staff induction program, mentoring, assistance for conference attendance and field trips to offshore campus. However, it appeared that many leaders and staff in international education did not attend these to benefits from these PD events. Many participants reported situations where target staff of a PD activity did not turn up, possibly due to priority on research, workload and an overlap with their working hours. Consequently, the PD activities failed to impart the knowledge and skills to the target staff. A leader gave an example about the consequence of curriculum development staff being absent from a workshop designed for them as below.

I think with those standalone formal workshops, the people who come are very keen and passionate about it, but they might not have the skills or the imprimatur, the kind of authority to make changes to the curriculum. So it's all very well for them to come along and say 'I want to'. Yeah, very well-intentioned. But they can't change the learning outcomes, they can't change the assessment. [...] All they can change is their teaching methods, they're only going to be changing a very small part of what they do and so they're not going to have a massive impact. (P08, female, higher education)

Such non-participation could be attributed to the fact that international education leaders, and staff were working from different units, many of whom are casual staff; thus, it was difficult to

involve all of them in a PD event due to different timetable. It was also caused by research-focused culture currently dominant in higher education. As a result, despite limited, these PD opportunities were often missed, which resulted in weakening of their leadership ability in the time of rapid evolving international education.

### Financial constraints

Participants suggested that financial constraints caused several tensions to PD of leaders in international education. As tertiary institutions are facing severe funding cut, expenses on their institution's operational activities are also carefully planned, as noted in Murray et al. (2014). First, this financial constraint issue forced institutions to employ fewer full-time staff and more casual staff to save budget. This situation resulted in casual staff not being entitled to or engaged with participating PD due to their work status, and full-time staff taking on more work responsibilities and having little time left for their PD.

So it's difficult to get the timing to fit the teaching cause that's where we generate our income from. It's difficult to organise all the teachers to be in attendance at the same time to do PD. If so, then there's a possibility we have to cancel classes which is the last resort [...]. If we run the same session two or three times it becomes cost prohibitive. (P15, male, vocational education)

In the nature of a sessional, employment in tertiary education is such that often times the sessional won't have the opportunity or won't be able to be free at the time when then PD is available because they're scraping for every dollar they can get. And they have to be here teaching rather than there in doing some PD. (P21, male, vocational education)

Second, a lack of resources appeared to force institutions to organize generic PD events to all staff instead of specific to international education staff and leaders. Thus, in the interviews, several participants reported their disappointment due to a mismatch between their expectations about the PD activities and reality. Although in many cases, participants could submit their PD plans well in advance, in the end, many found that PD activities offered did not match their plans and expectations. This could be partly explained in terms of a diverse international education workforce mentioned above.

I did a program management one, project management [provided] by [name of the university] which are again generic skills which are helpful in terms of your overall generic skills, but [not] for my transnational education partnership management role specifically... (P02, female, higher education)

I keep getting emails from them but most of them are not relevant to what I want. I think there is PD support, but we are not taking advantage of it maybe because it's not relevant to us. (P20, female, vocational education)

Consequently, within this context of scarce resource, several leaders found it hard to request PD funding because it was a sensitive issue.

But yeah money is very tight. I mean universities have seen massive budget cuts [...]. People are losing their jobs. And so you really have to kind of be careful now when you're asking for these types of "PD" [...]. You know, PD trip that's going to cost like \$5,000 or \$6,000 when the department next to you just lost staff, you know. And so I think people are worried about asking for money during a very tough budget time. (P05, male, higher education)

Thus, they either learned by themselves or let it go naturally against the backdrop of mounted workload. This is perilous for the development of international education because without developing appropriate skills for their leadership role in the time of rapid change in the field, they are not only losers but also affect the growth of all staff under their management.

## Discussion and conclusion

This study aimed to identify the PD needs of international education leaders and how the current work environment in Australian tertiary international education hinders or facilitates the fulfilment of their needs. While previous research into PD needs for international education leaders in Australia identified business skills and institutional and external relationship management as important areas of learning (Murray et al. 2014), this study reinforced these findings but also provided new insights into the emergent demands for leadership PD in international education. In particular, the study found that leaders needed PD in five key dimensions: understanding of and skills to work across cultural differences, knowledge of and expertise to respond to policy changes, leadership and management skills targeted for internationalisation, networking and relationship management skills to work with diverse stakeholders, and research skills. The study also revealed that their needs were not satisfactorily addressed due to existing institutional governance and structures, the research-focused culture that has not put internationalisation on the top of institutional development agenda, and financial constraints. In this section, Bourdieu's concepts of social fields and habitus will be used as a lens to help highlight the tension between their needs and possibility for fulfilment of these needs. This section will also discuss some implications for the sustainable development of Australian international education, with a focus on the PD of leaders.

This study suggests that the current social field of international education in Australian tertiary education exposes several challenges that hinder the actualisation of these leaders' PD needs. As reported in the "Findings" section, the current governance and management structure of many tertiary education institutions was not adequately inclusive to all staff. Casualisation of staff, the cross-department nature of work, and multi-roles that an individual had to cover further contributed to the difficulties faced by institutions in organising PD activities relevant to the needs of all leaders and staff in international education. That could explain why many participants found that PD activities in their institutions were too generic instead of specific to international education. For that reason, many refused to attend such activities, alongside personal factors and the heavy workload, as discussed below.

A significant contribution of this study to the existing literature on leadership in international education is that it shows a contradiction in the way leaders position their PD needs related to enhancing research skills and the institutional culture which prioritises research. On the one hand, leaders in internationalisation see the development of research competence as being critical to their role since this is related to enhancing their capacity for understanding and

analysing data, publishing and using research evidence to influence institutional and government policies. On the other hand, they perceive the institutional priority given to research as a barrier to academics' commitment to collaborating with leaders in promoting internationalisation. This culture was found to drive academics to attend research-focused PD activities instead of non-research ones related to offshore education and other internationalisation activities, because the former could assist with promotion if they successfully obtain external research funding. Likewise, this culture of research preference also reduced opportunities for these leaders to take part in PD activities outside their institutions if these activities were not directly related to research. It was because there was a lack of funding support mechanisms for non-research PD. As a result, it prevented these leaders from expanding their network with colleagues who work in the same field as theirs. Because professional landscapes for international education leaders are becoming dynamic, diverse and complex (de Wit 2015; Hudzik 2014; Hudzik and Stohl 2012; Streitwieser and Ogden 2016), leaders need to work across boundaries within the institutions and co-operate with a wide range of stakeholders, including employers, professional groups and government agencies. Therefore, skills to liaise with diverse stakeholders, other than those in the education sector, networking and collaboration would facilitate their work and provide better quality of teaching-learning, support services and management in international education. A lack of networking and cooperation between them, as identified by participants in this study, would reduce opportunities for effective execution of internationalisation activities and further makes the social field of international education fragmented.

Moreover, in economic dimension, a lack of resources due to government funding cuts inhibited Australian tertiary education institutions from organising PD for professionals and prevented leaders from attending desired PD activities outside their institutions. PD activities appeared to be organised in a way that can fit different groups of staff to reduce cost. Consequently, these rare PD activities became less valuable and specific to particular groups of staff.

As such, within the complex and quickly changing landscape of international education globally and in Australia, there have been tensions between what international education leaders needed to change and what the social field could offer. Following Bourdieu, there are always interactions between the social field and our habitus, and such interactions mutually make changes to each other (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The current social field of tertiary education, international education and institutional context will affect the leaders' habitus, i.e. shape their thinking and actions but may not be able to be on par with changes occurring in the international education sector. Without changing the current governance and management structure, the research-focused culture and funding mechanism, hindrances in the current social fields set up by Australian institutions would preclude leaders' efforts in continuously improving their expertise to serve their current work roles and anticipate coming changes in Australian international education.

The findings of this research show that leaders in international education need targeted professional development that is more tailored to their roles within the complex and dynamic context of internationalisation in higher education. The traditional PD activities that aim to enhance their generic leadership capacities and practices might no longer be adequate given the changing nature of internationalisation. The study offers compelling evidence about a critical need for situated PD support that aims to enhance leaders' capacity to research and understand data to inform their decision or/and implementation of internationalisation activities, to respond to policy changes and develop management skills and interpersonal skills to

work with increasingly diverse stakeholders, including contract providers or third party providers. PD for leadership targeted at internationalisation and the provision of situated workplace professional learning are crucial for leaders to enhance their performance and maximise the impact of internationalisation. A streamlined and coherent PD model in collaboration with organisations which specialise in providing PD for staff in international education is needed to provide leaders with genuine, meaningful and sustainable professional learning and optimise their potential capabilities. At the same time, an institutional mechanism that supports leaders' self-directed learning in a sustainable manner is needed, because these key players in international education have common needs in internationalisation but also hold specific roles with their situated needs in their workplace. Better recognition and communication of their roles, allocation of more funding for targeted PD and reduction of their workload should be high priorities on the agenda of Australian tertiary education institutions in the years to come.

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