LEARNING AND TEACHING EXPERIENCES IN AN OFFSHORE PROGRAMME:
CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

By

Li Jun (Ann) Wu-Ross

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

Unitec Institute of Technology

2013
ABSTRACT

This study examines the experiences of learners and lecturers undertaking a computing degree delivered offshore by lecturers from a New Zealand university to students in Vietnam in 2012. It focuses on the learning and teaching issues encountered and the strategies adopted by students and lecturers taking part in the course.

The research methodology was an interpretivist case study and involved semi-structured interviews with New Zealand lecturers and reflective journals blogs recorded by the Vietnamese students over a period of six weeks between the end of May through to early July 2012. Thematic analysis was used to synthesize important aspects of the intercultural context.

The findings highlight difficulties with the English language, teaching approaches and problems associated with distance learning, communication and cultural issues for both students and lecturers. Students and lecturers noted significant differences in teaching and learning approaches in the universities between Vietnam and New Zealand. English language skills presented communication challenges for students and this impacted negatively on their overall satisfaction of the learning experience. Students and lecturers described distance teaching and learning as requiring more effort than their face-to-face learning and teaching. Lecturers noted that Vietnamese students enjoyed socialising with their lecturers and preferred a closer working relationship than their Western counterparts. Vietnamese students enjoyed group learning situations and preferred in-direct communication. To address the learning and teaching challenges students and lecturers adopted a range of strategies which included practising English with lecturers, online English activities and reading widely. Teachers also attempted to use a
range of technologies such as video conferencing, wikis and blogs to assist students. Some also attempted to modify their course delivery methods and to utilise the Vietnamese teaching assistants to support student learning.

The findings of this research demonstrate key issues facing teachers and learners undertaking degree level courses in offshore contexts. The communication and language issues facing both lecturers and students have implications for the delivery of courses to students in diverse cultural contexts. This study establishes a first step in understanding the learning and teaching experiences of Vietnamese students and their New Zealand lecturers in the offshore programme, it presents the learning and teaching challenges the learners and lecturers faced and strategies they adopted to overcome the issues.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I wish to acknowledge and give special thanks to my supervisory team: my primary supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Jenny Collins and associate supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Howard Youngs, thank you for their guidance in the past year, and being a constant source of motivation when I started doubting my own ability. They have always been there for me guiding me through the thesis process. It would not have been possible to complete this very challenging academic task without their encouragement and support.

To Leo Hitchcock, director of offshore programme of the New Zealand university, thank you for introducing the offshore education in higher education as an area worthy of investigation which lead to the Master thesis. To Dr Alan Litchfield, for his advice and feedback on this research project. And thank you to the collaborative provision team for all the help they offered and their contributions during the research process.

I am grateful to the management of the New Zealand university, Finance and Planning Manager Peter Sumich, School Manager Terry Brydon and Associate Dean Research, Associate Professor Dr Tony Clear for their support, encouragement and for being great colleagues during this demanding period.

I would like to thank my family and friends for their support; special thanks to my five year old son, Max for his “understanding” and “patience”.

Last but not least, I would like to thank all the participants who have contributed in one way or another with this project as I can’t name them individually due to confidentiality reasons. On that note, I conclude my acknowledgement and with to express my gratitude to anyone who have contributed directly or indirectly in making this project possible.
DECLARATION

Name of candidate: Li Jun (Ann) Wu-Ross ..........................

This thesis entitled: Learning and Teaching Experiences in an Offshore Programme: Challenges and Strategies is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of Master of Education.

Candidate’s declaration

I confirm that:

• This thesis represents my own work;

• The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies;

• Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.
Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: 2012 - 1021

Candidate Signature: .....................................Date: ......................

Student number: 1132637
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................................. iii
DECLARATION ................................................................................................................... v
TABLE OF CONTENTS ................................................................................................. vi
LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................... x
LIST OF FIGURES ......................................................................................................... xi

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................... 1
  INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................. 1
  RATIONALE ................................................................................................................... 1
  RESEARCH AIM .............................................................................................................. 5
  RESEARCH QUESTIONS ................................................................................................. 5
  SCOPE OF THE STUDY ................................................................................................. 6
  BACKGROUND TO PROJECT ......................................................................................... 6
  THESIS ORGANISATION ............................................................................................... 8

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW .............................................................................. 10
  INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................. 10
  LITERATURE BACKGROUND ....................................................................................... 10
    Trend of International and Offshore Education .......................................................... 10
    Offshore Education in New Zealand .......................................................................... 14
  LEARNING AND TEACHING CHALLENGES IN THE INTERCULTURAL CONTEXT ....... 17
    Teaching and Learning Approaches .......................................................................... 17
    Student and Teacher Relationships ........................................................................... 24
    Intercultural Communication Competency .................................................................. 24
  STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME TEACHING AND LEARNING CHALLENGES IN
  INTERCULTURAL CONTEXTS ....................................................................................... 25
    Learning and Teaching Approaches .......................................................................... 25
    Course Content and Materials ................................................................................... 27
    Local Teaching Assistance ......................................................................................... 28
## SUMMARY .................................................................................................................. 3029

## CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY ........................................... 33

### INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................... 33

### METHODOLOGY .................................................................................................... 34

#### Research Aim ...................................................................................................... 34

#### Significance of Qualitative Research ..................................................................... 34

#### Interpretivist Approaches ..................................................................................... 36

#### Case Study ............................................................................................................ 37

### METHODS ............................................................................................................... 39

#### Sampling Selection .............................................................................................. 40

#### Interviews and Learning Journals .......................................................................... 41

### METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION ....................................................................... 42

#### Interviews ............................................................................................................. 42

#### Journals ................................................................................................................. 43

### METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS ........................................................................... 45

#### Data Reduction .................................................................................................... 45

#### Data Display ......................................................................................................... 46

#### Drawing Conclusions .......................................................................................... 47

### ETHICAL CONSIDERATION .................................................................................. 48

### SUMMARY ............................................................................................................. 49

## CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS .............................................................................................. 50

### INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................... 50

### PARTICIPANTS’ Backgrounds AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA .................................... 50

#### Lecturers ................................................................................................................ 51

#### Students .................................................................................................................. 52

### STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR LEARNING EXPERIENCE .......................... 53

#### Academic Expectations ......................................................................................... 53

#### Learning Issues ...................................................................................................... 54

#### Lecturers’ Experiences of Teaching in the Programme ........................................... 58

### STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING LEARNING AND TEACHING CHALLENGES ...... 66

#### Learning Strategies ............................................................................................... 66

#### Teaching Strategies ............................................................................................... 68

### SUMMARY ............................................................................................................. 71
Appendix H – Support Letter from the University in New Zealand .................................................. 134
Appendix I – Support Letter from the University in Vietnam ................................................................ 135
Appendix J – Ethical Approval ................................................................................................................ 136
LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Modes of Offshore Education ...................................................13

Table 2.2: Level of programmes offered Offshore Globally.......................14

Table 3.1: A comparison of Yin’s (2003) definition of *case study* with this study..................................................................................................................39

Table 4.1: Teaching Experience in the Offshore .........................................51

Table 4.2: Offshore Students’ Academic backgrounds ...............................52

Table 4.3: Motivations for Enrolling in the Offshore Degree.......................53

Table 4.4: Summary of Key Findings .........................................................71
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1. International Student numbers at the Tertiary Level from 1955 – 2012 ................................................................. 11

Figure 4.1. Learning Issues in the Offshore Programme............................ 55
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION
The number of New Zealand universities delivering programmes to Asian countries is increasing. Students enrolled in offshore programmes may have developed learning preferences that meet the needs of their home learning environment, but may not match the needs of their foreign education provider (Pears, 2010). On the other hand, lecturers’ teaching approaches may not be familiar to offshore students. The rapid internationalization of universities in countries like New Zealand makes it evident that a better understanding of offshore students’ academic needs, expectations and their learning habits will enhance the students’ learning experiences. In addition, cultural differences between Vietnam and New Zealand are substantial; therefore, cultural awareness and intercultural competence are vital skills for lecturers who are involved in course planning and managing, as well as subject / paper development and delivery offshore.

RATIONALE
Trade in higher education is a million dollar business (UNESCO, 2001). When the liberalisation of Foreign Direct Investment policies began around the mid-1980s and gained momentum in the 1990s, services Foreign Direct Investment surged, particularly in higher education (UNCTAD, 2004). Many Western universities took advantage of Foreign Direct Investment policy to invest in education overseas, and set up education institutions or campuses in Asia, Middle East and Africa.
countries. For example, a United Kingdom (U.K.) based university opened its first foreign-owned education institution in China in 2004, and an Australian based university launched a branch campus in Singapore in 2007 (Naidoo, 2007). The growth of international education has departed from the traditional form, such as students from a source country travelling to a host country to access education services, to offshore education via distance learning, where students access education services via the internet for example as a communication interface. The demand for higher education is growing and trans-border / offshore education is increasing. According to UNESCO (2001), the capacity of the public sector has not kept up with this demand; especially the recent development of Information Communication Technology and the ensuring growth in online learning has resulted in the creation of this very lucrative market. UNESCO (2001) also reported there are 44 of the 144 World Trade Organisation members are open education sectors for trade, and 21 of these have included commitments to higher education, New Zealand is one of the 21 nations.

Offshore education first considered that programmes developed by host academic institutions and delivered outside of the host’s country of origin provides students opportunities to earn an overseas qualification while remaining in their home country. Offshore education is also known as transnational education. In the In 2001, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2010)'s Council of Europe defines transnational education or offshore education as:

All types of higher education study programmes or set of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based. Such programmes may belong to the education system of a State different from the State in which it operates, or may operate independently of any national education. (UNESCO, 2010, p.12)
The growth of offshore education has drawn the attention of educators internationally in recent years; currently, there are several excellent publications in this area from Australia, America and Europe. However, offshore education is an under-researched area and there are limited publications available from New Zealand researchers. With the commercialisation of education services growing at a phenomenal rate, all trends pointing to continued growth (Naidoo, 2007), offshore education is taking more of a development in the universities in New Zealand. There is a growing need to understand more of offshore programme developments, and teaching and learning experiences of lecturers and students involved. It is largely time that this research gap is addressed as an important component of international education literature.

This study was motivated by the growing importance of offshore education in the universities in New Zealand. As highlighted in Chapter two, it combines my personal interest in the area of learning and teaching in offshore programmes offered in Asian countries, which are designed and delivered by Western countries. The research also links to my work which involves academic programmes administration and research support in a university, plus seven years working experience in working with international students in higher education in New Zealand, and previous teaching experience overseas. The rationale for this research project is that the number of universities in New Zealand delivering programmes offshore is increasing. As discussed by many researchers (such as Chapman & Pyvis, 2006; Castle & Kelly, 2010; Song-Turner & Willis, 2011), issues have arisen around learning and teaching experiences in offshore programmes. This study attempts to explore these important issues by examining the experiences of a group of Vietnamese students and their New Zealand lecturers engaged in an offshore programme run in Vietnam in 2012.
Course material produced by universities in New Zealand but delivered in Asian universities has become more common (Thanh, 2011). The use of online learning in offshore delivery also raises a number of cultural issues. International online learning environment brings together, an unfamiliar environment, students and educators whose experiences of teaching and learning stem from very different cultural traditions (Ziguras, 2001). There are significant cultural differences between Vietnam and New Zealand. As Eldridge and Cranston (2009) notes, there are a number of fundamental differences between Western and Eastern culture; including different ways of communication and interaction. Culture affects learning for students from different education systems and cultural backgrounds. Valiente (2008) stated that the context in which individuals learn, work and live has an important influence on creating and modifying the individual’s expectations on learning. Therefore, cultural factors, learning styles and academic needs should be analysed in order to understand and enhance the behaviour of Vietnamese students during the learning process.

Lecturers from New Zealand working with university students in Vietnam have also experienced cultural differences in learning approaches, which made teaching particularly challenging. As Pears (2010) suggests, in a cross-cultural setting, cultural awareness and intercultural communication competence are becoming increasingly important for both students and lecturers. More importantly, in the international education context, there is a need for a better understanding of Vietnamese students’ perceptions, and their views on course design and delivery. The internationalization of universities means there is a need to adjust material in offshore programmes to reflect the changing face of the student collective identity (Thanh, 2011).

Studies which focus on the learning experiences of Vietnamese students, and the impact these learning experiences have on their learning when
instructed by New Zealand university lecturers in the classroom in their home country are limited in number. Thus, this study aims to provide new insights into the learning experiences of Vietnamese students who undertake courses designed and delivered by New Zealand lecturers in Vietnam, and the challenges facing New Zealand lecturers teaching in offshore courses.

RESEARCH AIM
The research aim of this study was to explore the learning and teaching experiences of Vietnamese students and New Zealand lecturers taking part in the final year of a Computing degree run by a New Zealand university in a university in Vietnam in 2012, and the strategies students and teachers adopted to address the challenges they encountered.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
In order to achieve this aim, this research project investigated the questions which underpin this research, including:

Question 1: What learning experiences do Vietnamese students have when undertaking courses designed and delivered by New Zealand lecturers?

Question 2: What are the teaching experiences of New Zealand lecturers teaching in this offshore programme?

Question 3: How do participants attempt to address the learning and teaching challenges in an offshore programme?

In particular, this study addresses the issues of offshore teaching and learning and strategies that New Zealand lecturers and Vietnamese students adapted to overcome these issues.
SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In spite of the growth in international offshore education, the scope of this study will focus on exploring the New Zealand lecturers’ teaching experiences and Vietnamese students’ learning experiences in an offshore Bachelor of Computing and Information Sciences degree programme in Vietnam, and the strategies they employed to overcome the challenges they faced. The investigation involved three semi-structured interviews with the New Zealand lecturers and analysing online/offline journals recorded over a period of six weeks by seven Vietnamese students who volunteered to participate.

As a researcher, my role was to collect the data from the interviews and journals, consider the meanings of the data gathered, and to identify common themes between the lecturer and student groups. Then data was interpreted and meanings were built based upon participants’ contributions during the data collection phase.

BACKGROUND TO PROJECT

In 2009, a computing and information science degree programme was offered offshore in a university in Vietnam by the New Zealand university. The degree programme is a mixture of offshore (Vietnam) and offshore (New Zealand) study built upon formal credit transfers that recognised prior learning offshore (New Zealand). Students who enrol in the offshore joint degree programme would be awarded a joint degree from both the New Zealand and Vietnam universities if programme completion requirements are fulfilled. The model is called “Twinning” programme, Chapter two provides further details of this model in offshore education.

The degree programme delivered in Vietnam had the following characteristics:
The subjects / papers were developed by the New Zealand university and approved by the New Zealand Qualification and programme approval Authorities. The papers are part of the Bachelor of Computer and Information Sciences degree within the New Zealand university.

Subjects / papers which are part of the joint offshore degree programme are delivered in the university in Vietnam by New Zealand lecturers.

Subjects / papers offered are taught partly offshore (face-to-face), but are mostly offered online via Blackboard™, an online course management system (i.e. distance learning).

The programme is conducted in accordance with a formal agreement between the New Zealand and Vietnamese universities.

Students who complete the programme are granted a joint degree of both bachelors’ degrees of the New Zealand and Vietnamese universities.

A number of lecturers who had teaching duties offshore in Vietnam had expressed concerns about the number of plagiarism cases and the students’ English language capability. Some lecturers of collaborative provision also noted that the majority of the Vietnamese students enrolled in the New Zealand computing bachelor’s degree in Vietnam were not familiar with the New Zealand lecturers’ teaching approaches. The literature suggests that enhancing teaching and learning experiences in an offshore programme requires engaging students appropriately with the needs of students in an offshore context (Thanh, 2011). To run a programme offshore successfully, an understanding of the local environment could assist lecturers with their teaching duties. As suggested by Gribble and Ziguras (2010), staff involved in offshore programmes need to be able to bridge the cultural differences and apply local knowledge in order to provide students with what they want from a foreign degree. The context of this study was to ask lecturers and
students directly about their learning and teaching experiences in the offshore programme in Vietnam, and adoptions they employed to deal with the issues and challenges they faced. This study sought to identify the academic and learning needs of the students that the New Zealand university wishes to serve.

**THESIS ORGANISATION**

This thesis consists of six chapters, each discussing specific stages of research process. The main content of each chapter is briefly outlined below.

Chapter two presents a critical review of the literature relevant to the research topic. First is a review of teaching and learning challenges in an intercultural context. Then learning experiences in a Western context are presented. Following that is a discussion of teaching challenges encountered in offshore teaching. Finally, there is a brief discussion about cultural awareness and intercultural competency in offshore teaching and learning.

Chapter three outlines the methodological approach adopted within the study. It provides the rationale which underpinned the decision to use interpretivist case study methodology for exploring the issues and challenges of offshore teaching and learning in Vietnam and the strategies the lecturers and students adopted to address those issues. Research methods and data collection are discussed. Justification is provided for employing a thematic analysis approach with regard to the analysis of the study’s material, and ethical considerations are also outlined.
Chapter four presents the research findings and an analysis of the data collected from the semi-structured interviews and journal recording. The findings are organised into four key themes: 1) learning challenges in the Western context. 2) teaching challenges encountered offshore. 3) the strategies that the lecturers and students adopted to overcome the teaching and learning issues and challenges, and, 4) culture-related experiences offshore. The findings presented in Chapter four lead to discussion and analysis in Chapter five.

Chapter five discusses the significance of the findings of this study in relation to the literature, with reference to the themes that were identified. Research questions provide a framework for the discussion, which includes learning and teaching issues and challenges in the offshore programme in Vietnam, strategies that the lecturers and students adopted to address the issues and challenges experienced, and culture-related experiences in the offshore programme.

Chapter six presents the conclusions which answer the research questions, it concludes that there are significant differences in teaching and learning approaches between the universities in Vietnam and New Zealand due to different cultures and education systems; to overcome the teaching and learning challenges, a number of strategies have to be adopted. Also in this chapter, a list of recommendations is made resulting from this study. At the end of the chapter, the limitations of this study and suggestions for further study are discussed.
INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a literature review of international education and teaching and learning challenges in an intercultural context. The section following will discuss learning experiences in a Western context, followed by challenges encountered in offshore teaching. Finally, the last section will cover cultural awareness and intercultural competency in higher education.

LITERATURE BACKGROUND

Trend of International and Offshore Education

Higher education is fast becoming a global business; the influence of internationalisation has become increasingly widespread in the education industry (Eldridge & Cranston, 2009). Internationalisation is not a new phenomenon to many universities. Many already have international staff and students on campus, and have an international element to their curriculum (Naidoo, 2007). However, globalisation, on the other hand, is potentially more challenging for higher education, although it offers considerable opportunities, such as offshore campus and programme, which has emerged in a globalised higher education context that includes (Knight, 2003):

- An increased demand for tertiary education in societies and economies in which knowledge plays an increasingly important role.
- The introduction of a market and trade approach to international education.
- An increased prominence of education mobility.
- Advances in the use of information and communication technologies for delivery of education.

The liberalisation of the education services sector follows a boom in the international trade of education that has manifested itself over the last three decades. According to the OECD (2012) education statistic report, more than 4.1 million tertiary-level students were enrolled outside their country of citizenship in 2010, compared to 149,590 in 1955. The OECD report (2012) also shows that New Zealand is one of the six countries who have the highest percentages of international students among their tertiary students. Asians account for 52% of all students who study abroad world-wide. Figure 2.1 illustrates the trend in international education students flows.

![Figure 2.1. International Student numbers at the Tertiary Level from 1955 – 2012. Source: OECD Education Statistic Report 2012](image-url)
The growth of international education might not necessarily be attributed to student mobility, but also, education institutions offer its education services abroad by establishing local branch campuses or partnerships with education institutions in the host country, mostly Asian and Middle Eastern countries (Naidoo, 2007). The British Council (2004) forecasted that in the U.K transnational delivery was expected to outpace student mobility. As anticipated, by 2007, offshore education already accounts for an estimated 50% of U.K international enrolments (Naidoo, 2007). In Australia higher education, offshore education experienced 29% growth from 1996 to 2005, and it predicted a similar growth in the next decade (DEST 2006).

Offshore education (see chapter one for definition), also refers as transnational education in some literatures, is a component of international education, though its development is not a new international activity in higher education. In the middle 1950s, US universities provided offshore education services to serve both their students on study-abroad programmes and US military personnel (Verbik & Merkley, 2006). Following the expansion of offshore education in recent years, not only public and private higher education institutions involved in the offshore education landscape, but an increasing number of new or alternate providers, such as media companies in the U.K and Canada, multinational companies in the U.S, were also engaged in offshore education activities (Knight, 2003). This increase in offshore education activities reflects the increasing trend in the education services, as highlighted in Chapter one. This extends beyond individual country policy directives, surfacing to a multilateral level as part of education agreement cross the borders (Naidoo, 2007).
There are a variety of modes in which offshore education can be defined. The World Trade Organisation General Agreement on Trade in Services, and other international bodies use the following four classifications (Ministry of Education NZ, 2001). As illustrated in table 2.1. The mode used for this case study is a combination of mode B and C, but unique on its own, as discussed in Chapter one background of the project.

Table 2.1. Mode of Offshore Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Mode A | Cross-border supply (or distance education), in which an educational service is provided across borders but without the movement internationally of either student or teacher.  
  e.g. an international student enrolled in a correspondence or distance course through an education provider, but studying from their home country. |
| Mode B | Commercial presence, in which the education provider establishes a presence in the country in which the student resides.  
  e.g. through a twining programme, articulation programmes or establishment of an offshore campus. |
| Mode C | Presence of natural persons, in which the educator moves to the country of residence of the students to provide the service. It can be full or partial degree provision. Partial degree model is based upon a mixture of offshore and onshore study – Twinning programme |

Source: Adapted from Ministry of Education New Zealand Report (2001) and Clear (2011)
Offshore Education in New Zealand

Trade in education services is fast becoming a global business (Czinkota, 2006). With export education, estimated at approximately US$65 billion and representing roughly 3% of global services exports (Alderman, 2001). In New Zealand, an educational service is estimated to be respectively the fourth largest service sector export (Vincent-Lancrin, 2005).

Both Australia and New Zealand have experienced growth in offshore education in the last few years, and students enrolled in offshore programmes will represent 47% of all international enrolments by 2025 in Australian institutions, with more than 70% of these offshore programmes being in North and South East Asian (Davis, Olsen & Bohm, 2000). In New Zealand, the latest data available shows that in 2006, 29 of the 78 tertiary education providers were offering offshore programmes, of these, 21 were state tertiary education providers (7 universities, 13 polytechnics) (Naidoo, 2007), the rest were private institutions. A study commissioned by Education New Zealand shows that offshore programmes were largely offered in North and South East Asian countries, such as China, Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong. Table 2.2, illustrates the level of programmes offered by New Zealand institutions offshore by 2006.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Offered offshore</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non Formal Qualifications</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate level of programmes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate degree /diploma programmes</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate programmes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>137</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adapted from Naidoo (2007) and Education New Zealand Commissioned Report (2006)*
The history of international education in New Zealand goes back to the 1950s. Collins (2012) pointed out that the introduction of the Colombo Plan scholarship programmes expanded trade and cultural relationships with South East Asia, which provided the opportunity for scholars from South East Asia to study in higher education in New Zealand. Collins further argues that the significance of the Colombo plan was the “political and policy interactions that cross geographical and cultural boundaries and the way individuals encountering new cultural ideas and structures find ways to adapt to and reshape the ideas they encounter” (Collins, 2012, p.130). Offshore education operations have the capacity to generate additional revenue for the New Zealand education provider. Ziguras (2007) points out those offshore education providers can capitalise on significant investment that they have made over the years in infrastructure, staffing and curriculum development by extending programmes to engage a larger student population based overseas. In doing so, it can enhance institutions’ reputation both in New Zealand and overseas, Ziguras (2007) argues that it also provides students and staff with international engagement opportunities.

New Zealand is in an early stage in the development of offshore education compared to other major education exporting countries. According to Ziguras (2007), the main attractions of offshore education are:

- Broadens access to education.
- Provides a type of education that is not currently available, or not in sufficient scale.
- Responds to the learners’ educational demands; contribute to their cognitive, cultural, social, personal and professional development.

The initiatives of awarding institutions are:

- Builds on an existing strength.
o Be seen by staff as a worthwhile and rewarding activity.
o Improves the institutions’ reputation.
o Helps or hinders efforts to meet the institution’s key strategic objectives.

Model of full or partial degree provision across country boundaries in a collaborative fashion are becoming more commonplace as the globalisation of higher education increases (Clear, 2011). Studies, such as Wilkins, Blakrishnan and Huisman (2012) and Sharma (2012) found that many Asian students were motivated to study an international degree because they believed that an international education and a foreign qualification would better prepare them for a career in the international labour market. Furthermore, their studies revealed that a student’s English language ability usually had a significant impact on their overall academic attainment and level of satisfaction.

The British Council’s Education Intelligence Unit ran a student survey from 2007 until September 2012 and received 160,000 responses. In their report on the survey, they state that students intending to study for an international education degree valued combining study with employment more than the reputation, brand or ranking of the awarding institution. The report also noted that five years ago, offshore students were interested in the reputation of the institution. However, this has now shifted so that offshore students are more interested in a degree that is recognised overseas. A major motivation was the desire to study overseas in the future, as well as experiencing different teaching methods and new ways of learning (Sharma, 2012).

Offshore education is described as a situation where international students are located in a different country to that of the institution providing their education services (Davis, et al. 2000). Issues relating to offshore learning have arisen, and the challenges that Western
educators face have drawn the attention of researchers from around the world in recent years. One of the main driving forces for New Zealand universities to expand their services offshore is the need for revenue, as funding from the New Zealand Government has been declining over the past few years. The internationalisation of higher education manifest themselves in various forms, of which offshore education have been experiencing rapid increases over the past decade (Czinkota, 2006).

LEARNING AND TEACHING CHALLENGES IN THE INTERCULTURAL CONTEXT

Tertiary students engaging in offshore programmes have high expectations of academic success when they enrol in a course taught within a Western context. However, many students have experienced learning cultural shock when they have discovered the Western education’s emphasis on communication and problem-solving ability (Song-Turner & Willis, 2011), rather than just passing exams.

Teaching and Learning Approaches

A key focus in literature on learning and teaching approaches is that the education system in Vietnam is typical of Asian countries, in that it is a teacher-centred (Thanh, 2011) teaching approach where students’ achievement are measured through examinations. To be successful in exams, students are expected to reproduce information covered in textbooks and lectures. Thanh (2011) indicated that in the universities in Vietnam, a majority of students did not see some of the class activities, such as group work and presentations, as being better than traditional practices in terms of increasing academic achievement. Traditional practices include copying lecturers’ notes in the classroom, and memorising course material to pass exams. The Vietnamese education system stresses the reproduction of knowledge (Wong, 2004). This view is supported by Rao (2001) who believes these differences in attitude
towards knowledge affect the assessment of Asian students by Western lecturers because of different cultural values, types of knowledge and skills.

In Western education systems, student-centred practice is developed based on Western cultural values, which can create conflict with students coming from a Confucian-based cultural heritage (Biggs, 1996). Wong’s (2004) and Rao’s (2001) studies found that in East Asian classrooms, students’ learning styles were still very much influenced by Confucian philosophy which places emphasis on rote learning; most students see knowledge as something to be transmitted by the teacher rather than discovered by learners. Park (2000) indicated that due to more than a thousand years of Chinese influence, the Confucian philosophy is very much alive in most Vietnamese classrooms, and it sets a powerful interpersonal norm for daily behaviours, attitudes, and practices. The strategy of developing nations to rapidly promote the adoption of technologies and teaching methods initiated in Western nations is aimed at gaining a more competitive edge in the global market (Knight, 2003). In offshore education, Thanh (2011) warns that without local cultural contexts, Western approaches may be ineffective.

A study found that Western students, such as students from the U.S., view learning as a process by which an individual’s mind acquires what is out there (Li, 2003). Li’s study further pointed out those internal learner characteristics included cognitive skills, intelligence, and abilities on the one hand, and thinking, communicating, and active engagement on the other. This suggests that the Westerners’ view of learning is self-developmental, rather than passively acquiring subject knowledge. In the context of higher education, many leading scholars who support the idea that knowledge can be learned best through the experience of the world (Marton & Booth, 1997) and that quality of teaching and learning is about understanding what the learners have to do to create knowledge (Biggs,
More recently, Clear (2011) states that university contexts require richer conceptions that prepare students to be critical thinkers and problem solvers in an environment where knowledge is negotiated socially. It is worth noting that in a broader context of teaching and learning, lecturers’ approaches to teaching are closely linked to the students’ perceptions in the context of their learning motivations and approaches.

Some researchers note that, in general, students from Asian countries usually accomplish learning through rote memorisation and teachers’ lectures; classrooms are highly structured (Biggs, 1996; Pears, 2010; Liu, 2008). Students are taught to be polite and are not encouraged to ask questions, but remain silent. Wong’s (2004) and Hitchcock’s (2009) also found that Southeast Asian students usually listen to lectures and take notes copiously. McCornac’s and Phah’s (2010) study found that rote learning still exists in most universities in Vietnam, much of this can be attributed to the educational system’s reliance on entrance and graduation examinations, thus, making students passive learners. Nguyen (2002) concluded that as a result, teachers do not emphasise critical thinking. Phan and McCornac (2010) argued that although there is a movement to change teaching methodologies to be more student-centred. However, the process is difficult because of the lack of qualified staff, facilities and material. Therefore, the consequence of it, as Nguyen (2002) explains that the traditional lecturing style still plays a major role, and plagiarism appears to exist in Vietnam institutions because students have never been taught the proper method of conducting research.
Course Design and Delivery Offshore

Wong’s (2004) view is that it is important for institutions to not impose cultural colonialism and the indiscriminate use of Western theories and Western perspectives upon offshore academics. Sham’s and Huisman’s (2012) study concluded that localising the curriculum, while at the same time trying to offer identical courses and learning experiences to students in their home country, was one of the biggest challenges for Western educators and institutions. There has been growing concern over the increasing number of Western universities exporting a locally developed curriculum that has not been appropriately adapted to the needs of offshore students (Gribble & Ziguras 2010; Kelly & Tak, 1998). James (2000) warned educators that the danger is that universities selling education outside their frontiers will attempt to impose the same standards everywhere; this will disassociate education from the social, cultural and political origins of a country. The divergent views relating to curriculum and pedagogy in the offshore context are also found in Dunn and Wallace’s (2006) study. Their study found that one view is students engage in a Western degree and they want an insight into the Western outlook and Western practices, and want access to an unmediated Western curriculum and pedagogy. The other view is that to adapt curriculum and pedagogy is somewhat condescending; a form of reverse colonialism that denies that sophisticated Asian and other cultures can be selective in engaging with a Western approach (Dunn & Wallace, 2006).

Engaging with the offshore context in terms of an intercultural curriculum, it appears the most prevalent view is to include relevant local case studies and material in curriculum and pedagogy (Gribble & Ziguras, 2010), and more importantly, in-depth understanding of the host institution and education system of the host country (Leask, 2004). Leask (2004) suggests it is important to ensure international perspectives are included in teaching methodology, structure and organisation, which
should link international perspectives, intercultural issues to the curriculum, and the ability to apply international standards and practices within a discipline or professional area is also important. To achieve that, Gribble and Ziguras (2010) suggest that educators involved in offshore teaching need to develop a good understanding of the socio-cultural, political, legal, and economic contexts of the host country.

Offshore programme delivery relies on information communication technology to facilitate routine crossing of borders. The New Zealand university participating in this study elected to use a course management system named Blackboard™ as the virtual learning environment. Communication tools used included emails, online/offline group discussion, WIKIS and blogs. Clear’s (2011) investigation indicated that he and his associates were still pondering the most effective solution for students’ e-portfolio, which would reduce paper demands and enable academic access and management of the offshore educational quality assurance process. This is supported by some writers who have pointed out that not all papers are readily taught via online and so the uptake of distance learning was a challenge for students and lecturers (Wood, Tapsell & Soutar, 2005). In addition, Ziguras (2001) found educational technologies may be appropriate in countries in which self-directed study is emphasised, but may not be as appropriate in Southeast Asian countries in where education has traditionally been more tightly structured and teacher – directed; students may not be comfortable with such innovations.

Joo (1999) warned that in societies in which discipline and submission to authority is praised rather than individualism and freedom, teachers might feel too uncomfortable to take initiatives to accept the scrutiny of peers, or to hand greater control to their students. Likewise, students accustomed to traditional methods may find it hard to adapt to active and innovative learning and techniques. (Joo, 1999)
Technology is increasingly shaping the nature of offshore education delivery as information and communication technologies allow institutions to extend their reach beyond the physical classrooms. Educational technologies have increased the scale of offshore education by allowing programme providers to more easily coordinate operations across borders. However, it has led to concerns about cultural impact. While differences in teaching and learning may exist between exporting and importing countries, Ziguras (2001) suggests that the differences should be reduced as common educational philosophies and techniques take hold around the world, rather than being purely Western approaches.

The Influence of Culture on Learning

Vietnam is a country strongly committed to higher education, dating back to its Confucian roots (Kelly, 2000). Despite the economic, political and social upheaval experienced by Vietnam over the past millennium, Confucian beliefs are still quite evident in Vietnamese culture and the sense of country remains strong (Le, 2002). According to Biggs (1996), rote learning is generally described as learning without understanding. Wong (2004) believed that the influence of a Confucian tradition on Vietnamese students and the demands of the national academic system meant students had no choice but to rely on rote learning as a strategy to succeed.

Some research suggests that Asian students learn better in concrete subjects (Marginson, 2011). Other research has shown that many Southeast Asian students tend to be passive and nonverbal in class, and students rarely initiate class discussions until they are called on due to reticence and humility, which are highly valued in Asian cultures (Biggs, 1996; Marginson, 2011; Rao, 2001). This is supported by Hofstede (1986), who suggested that students from most Asian countries do not
want to show off what they know, and they do not want to lose face in case their answers are incorrect. Moreover, Phan and McCornac (2010) also pointed out that because of collectivistic orientation, students in Western institutions need to express their opinions, beliefs and feelings openly and directly, while students under the Confucian influence, questioning lecturers as disrespectful.

In a society under the influence of Confucian principles, an individual must merge himself into the group or collective (Chen, 2010). A society maintains its hierarchical social structure through its education system. Chen further stated that the collective society is nothing but vertical or hierarchical relationships and it is essential function is to build social order upon these hierarchical relationships. Under the Confucian tradition, students and teachers are part of the same social structure, and they are expected to work together in order to increase their common welfare. Both parties have different but complementary responsibilities to one another and both are expected to take care of one another’s needs and progression (Biggs, 1996). As with many other Asian cultures, the Vietnamese place a great deal of importance on saving face (Fahey, 2000). Fahey further stated Vietnamese people tend not to state opinions or give information in case they are incorrect. In fact, indirectness is seen as subtle and sophisticated (McCornac & Phan, 2010).

Countries like Vietnam with a Confucian heritage regard teacher and student relationships as similar to the father–son relationship (Hofstede, 1986). In support, Fahey (2000) suggests that in Vietnam, teachers, regardless of their age or sex, enjoy great respect and prestige in Vietnamese society, the student–teacher relationship retains much of the quality of a son’s respect for his father’s wisdom and of a father’s concern for his son’s welfare. However, not everyone agrees with Hofstede’s (1986) view, because of the perception of indigenous filial piety and authoritarian moral values. Vietnamese students are more
likely, but not always likely, than students in Western cultures to accept a professor’s instructions and rules without questioning (McCornac & Phan, 2010). Students perceive that the responsibility for learning is shared between both teacher and student. Furthermore, it is the teacher’s primary responsibility to ensure that students achieve the learning objectives (Song-Turner & Willis, 2011). In contrast, in Western countries such as the United Kingdom, United States, Australia and New Zealand, students are expected to be more independent learners (Gribble & Ziguras, 2010; Pears, 2010). This view is also seen in Hitchcock’s (2009) study, which found that in an online situation, if a teacher “goes quiet” (p. 33), the New Zealand students will eventually chase up the teacher to see what is happening, but the Vietnamese students are happier just to wait until the teacher re-appears and takes the lead.

**Student and Teacher Relationships**

Researchers such as Pears (2010) argue that many Western educators teaching in offshore courses experience a lack of interaction in the classroom due to an expectation amongst the students that they should be respectful to their teachers (Liu, 2008). The student-teacher relationship is constructed on a hierarchical basis; questioning and in-class interaction between students and teacher is restricted, unless the teacher has given an indication that discussion is appropriate. Park’s (2000) study also pointed out that Southeast Asian students have distinct and diverse cultural values such as respect for authority, and a strong sense of social hierarchy.

**Intercultural Communication Competency**

Hoftstede (1986) asserts that the responsibility for improving students’ learning experiences, and the burden of adaptation in cross-cultural learning situations, should primarily be on the teachers. The need for intercultural communication skills has become evident in the increasingly
diverse contexts that characterise contemporary universities and classrooms. As Pears (2010) argues, lecturers in universities must possess a certain level of intercultural communication competence to understand the world they live in and how they fit into this world. This level of intercultural communication competence is also required by educators if they are to transmit cross-cultural knowledge and information to students. However, as Gribble and Zigura’s (2010) study showed, the experience of offshore teaching is a much more valuable learning experience for lecturers than any formal training that can be provided before departure, especially in learning how to relate to offshore students and in understanding how the curriculum is received in other countries.

Nisbett's (2003) Geography of Thought focused attention on the work of intercultural communication. It is evident that there are some fundamental and significant differences between the thinking processes and communication styles of Western and Eastern people. To enhance learning and teaching experiences in higher education, it is important for educators to be aware of cultural differences, to develop intercultural communication skills, and to become competent in intercultural contexts.

**STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME TEACHING AND LEARNING CHALLENGES IN INTERCULTURAL CONTEXTS**

**Learning and Teaching Approaches**

A number of scholars argue that culture has a strong influence on learning styles in students from different education environments (Biggs, 1996, Gribble & Zigura’s, 2010, Hitchcock, 2009, Liu, 2008, Pears, 2010). Research from a variety of sources suggests that learners from Western and Eastern contexts have a significantly different perception of learning, and that perception can lead them to approach learning tasks in ways which are radically different from each other. Some research
suggests that efforts to impose Western pedagogy on students from a Confucian heritage culture have met with failure (Boekaerts, 1998). Song-Turner and Wills (2011) suggested that academics should consider diversifying their teaching styles so that students with different learning styles can benefit from their instructions. An awareness of students’ preferred learning styles and their perceptions of effective teaching practices can aid teachers in selecting appropriate teaching strategies and structuring the learning environment to better serve students’ needs in learning.

Some scholars have been promoting that educators with knowledge of learning styles can tailor pedagogy so that it best coincides with learning styles exhibited by the majority of students, on the other hand, students with knowledge of their own preferences are empowered to use various techniques to enhance learning, which in turn may impact on overall educational satisfaction (Holmes, 2005). As Valiente (2008) points out, this ability is particularly critical and useful when an instructor’s teaching style does not match student’s learning styles, as suggested by Valiente (2008) and Zhang and Brunton (2007). Research has also found that a teaching style and learning style mismatch might challenge students to adjust, grow intellectually, and learn in more integrated ways; learners are more likely to be successful when classrooms are tailored to their learning preferences (Romanelli, Bird & Ryan, 2009). In an offshore classroom. However, the ultimate goal in an offshore classroom is to instil within students the skills to recognise and react to various styles so that learning is maximised no matter what the environment, Romanelli et al. (2009) emphasised that this skill is essential for an independent learner. As discussed in the previous sections, teaching and learning approaches in Vietnam are different to the Western countries such as New Zealand. This study will explore the teaching and learning strategies that the New Zealand lecturers and Vietnamese students adopted.
to deal with this mismatch of teaching and learning approaches. The findings are presented in Chapter four and discussion takes place in Chapter five.

**Course Content and Materials**

Many Vietnamese students in offshore programmes are not familiar with Western ideas, culture and business practices. On the other hand, New Zealand lecturers are not well equipped with local knowledge of Vietnam. An understanding of the local environment would assist lecturers during their early offshore visits. Gribble and Ziguras (2010) suggest that staff involved in offshore programmes need to be able to bridge the cultural differences in order to provide students with what they want from a foreign degree in a way that is not disrespectful to the values of the host culture.

Researchers have questioned the ability of universities to offer a curriculum and institutional culture offshore that is consistent with what is offered at the host institutions (Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2010; Wood et al., 2005). The universities are required by the regulatory bodies to deliver the same programme offshore with the same procedures and to the same standards that apply at the host universities. However, concerns have been raised by researchers who claim that the total product offered offshore rarely comes close to the home product in terms of breadth of curriculum, quality of academic staff, physical environment, learning resources and social facilities (Altbah, 2010). Donn and Al Manthri (2010) also stated that the product of Western universities may be of the highest quality in their home countries; they might not satisfy the needs or interests of stakeholders in other countries.

To deal with this issue raised in offshore teaching and learning, Biggs (2001) suggests that universities develop a range of strategies to build
and maintain similar standards to those which are espoused within the Western university’s curriculum. To achieve this, Debowski (2006) emphasises on structuring a range of learning opportunities for each teaching topic, so that lecturers have the flexibility to adapt around the needs of learners offshore, whilst still maintaining the standards of the Western universities. Although changing the assessment methods would be a way to help learners to adapt (Biggs, 1996), other strategies have been put forward by researchers (Pears, 2010, Thanh, 2011) to address the issues of cross-culturalism and adaptability. By the same token, Valiente (2008) has found that in a community where students are regarded as passive recipients of data, it would be difficult for the lecturers to teach using a constructivist approach; it was important to take into consideration cultural resources before applying education theories in practice.

In this case, the computing degree programme offered offshore in Vietnam, has been developed by the New Zealand university and its curriculum is designed to meet the requirements of New Zealand education authorities. As part of the agreement between the universities of New Zealand and Vietnam, the course delivered in Vietnam must have no modifications. To help the researcher understand the complexities of this issue, this study will be looking at the point of view of both lecturers and students, findings will be outlined in chapter four and analysed in the following chapter.

**Local Teaching Assistance**

One of the strategies that have been adopted by some universities to deal with offshore teaching challenges is to employ local tutors. Leask’s (2004) study found that teaching offshore can be an intellectual challenge and an emotional journey. Tutors from the host country, in this situation, play a very important role in assisting the lecturers with their teaching duties. Leask (2004) further mentioned that while the intellectual
property was officially owned by the offshore programme provider, teaching involved a short period – usually two to three weeks - of intensive face-to-face blocks of teaching with students, with follow up tutorials delivered by local tutors employed by the host institution in Vietnam. During the tutorials, the local tutors took on the role of cultural mediator and translator and made the intellectual property of the programme provider accessible to a different cultural audience in the host country. In support of Leask’s (2004) view, McBurnie and Ziguras (2007) found that students taught by both university lecturers and local instructors reported higher overall satisfaction with their education. Debowski (2006) advocated that experienced academics of parent institutions can offer strong role models to local tutors, but the literature is silent in regards to the influence of local tutors on the content of offshore programmes or on the teaching and learning process.

The views of Debowsi (2006), Leask (2004), McBurnie and Ziguras (2007) demonstrate that to have a local teaching assistant involved in offshore teaching and learning is a good practice in dealing with learning and teaching challenges. This view, however, is challenged by other researchers. Wilkins, Blakrishnan and Huisman (2012) argued that there are also disadvantages to employing local instructors as opposed to expatriate teachers from the country of the programme provider and institution. This was because students and parents expected that students would be taught by Western lecturers when they enrolled in a foreign programme in their homeland. This study will investigate the role of the teaching assistant and their involvement in learning and teaching in offshore programme. The findings will be presented in chapter four, and subsequently, the outcome of having local teaching assistants to assist teaching and learning activities will be discussed in chapter five as part of the strategies that were adapted by the lecturers.
Cultural Issues

Hall (1970) defines culture as an unconscious framework which makes communication possible but intercultural conflict inevitable. Diverse cultural value orientations, and their underlying cultural assumptions, affect our way of responding, and of handling people and situations. Students from different cultures interpret messages differently, which increases the chances of misunderstanding. Recognising cultural differences and awareness of those differences is important, as we should not assume that everyone’s thoughts and actions are just like ours. The growing globalisation of societies is challenging universities around the world. Bender-Szymanski (2000) suggested that intercultural education should be introduced to schools and universities, as intercultural communication competence is a key skill for all educators and students. According to Beamer (2010), intercultural communication competence is the ability to encode and decode meanings in matches that correspond to the meanings held in the other communicator’s repository. Byram (1997) further defined the component elements of competences to include attitude; orientation to act; and, knowledge and skills of interpreting and relating. As increasing numbers of universities offer programmes offshore, the need for intercultural communication skills has become evident in the universities and offshore campuses. Students and educators must possess a certain level of intercultural communication competence to understand the world they live in and how they fit into this world. This level of intercultural communication competence is also required for the educators to transmit cross-cultural knowledge and information to students offshore.

Offshore programmes provide a unique opportunity for academic staff to move into a new place away from their own cultural identity as described by Crozet, Liddicoat, and Lo Bianco (1999). The New Zealand lecturers who undertake offshore teaching positions are the cultural outsiders in the host country, Vietnam. To close the teaching gap, Hofstede (1986) suggested that there are two methods: 1) Teach the teacher how to
teach, and 2) Teach the learner how to learn. Furthermore, Hofstede (1986) stated that the focus of the teacher’s training should be on learning about his/her own culture; getting intellectually and emotionally accustomed to the fact that in other societies, people learn in different ways. This means taking one step back from one’s values and beliefs, which is far from easy.

Le (2009) and Brown (2010) suggest that intercultural interaction is a complex task for many of the individuals involved. In order to be competent in an intercultural context, the first step is to confront the difference of cultural perspectives, then filter the messages of the host culture through their own perceptions, and finally, ensure that their response and reaction are appropriate. According to Padilla and Perez (2003), cultural competence is the learned ability to function in a culture in a manner that is congruent with the values, beliefs, customs, mannerisms and language of the majority of members of the culture, which is important in intercultural adaption. Intercultural learning is described as relating to the diversity of cultures that exist within countries, communities and institutions (Knight, 2003). The risks associated with intercultural learning could be embarrassment and failure, and when communicating and interacting with culturally different people, the experience can sometimes be psychologically intense (Paige, 1993).

With the rapid development of offshore teaching, many academics and administrative staff have an increased awareness of cultural and pedagogical issues, but this has been learnt on the job (Leask, 2004). There are few institutions that offer systemic professional development in the area of intercultural competency. Dunn and Wallace (2006) stated that if a university is to engage in offshore teaching, there is a need to help its academic and administrative staff to develop intercultural competencies that translate to pedagogy, curriculum and
student support processes. They further suggested that the support to prepare academics and administrative staff should include flexible delivery, e-learning, and cross-cultural communication.

SUMMARY
This chapter has presented an overview of the emerging patterns in the international and offshore education landscape. It outlined the growth of New Zealand offshore education, in particular programmes offered in Asian countries. Through a literature review of learning and teaching experiences in an intercultural context, a number of key issues were highlighted which are relevant to this study. Chapter four will present the findings from this study as they relate to learning issues facing lecturers and students’ teaching and learning issues in an offshore programme in Vietnam, and strategies that lecturer and student adapted to overcome these issues.

Internationalisation is not a new phenomenon to many New Zealand universities; many education providers already have international staff and students on campus and offshore. The influence of globalisation has become increasingly widespread in the education arena; higher education is fast becoming a global business. Global business offers education providers considerable opportunities to gain knowledge from external sources such as an offshore programme. It also increases the challenges for education providers in teaching and learning, as there are some significant differences in cultures and education systems between New Zealand and East Asian countries, such as Vietnam, which should not be overlooked.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION
This chapter introduces and discusses the methodological approach adopted within the study. The chapter opens by presenting the aims of the research. The rationale which underpinned the decision of using qualitative interpretivist case study methodology is discussed. The next sections focus on research methods and data collection. The last section describes the thematic analysis approach employed with regard to the analysis of the study’s material.

In summary, the components of a research design include:

○ Research methodology
○ Research methods
○ Data collection
○ Data analysis

The research methodology seeks to answer the research questions. In turn, the type of research methodology needs to be appropriate for the type of questions. Selection of a research methodology brings both the research methods (such as the methods of data collection) and the methods of analysis into focus.

The most appropriate research method was an interpretivist approach using a case study methodology. In essence, this study was an interpretivist case study of the experiences of learners and lecturers in an
offshore programme. As a case study the research focussed on a contained issue “Learning and teaching experiences in an offshore programme: Challenges and Strategies”. The data was gathered from interviews, online (blogs) and offline (emails) journal recording about the participants’ experiences in unique learning context, the teaching of an offshore computing programme by New Zealand teachers to a particular group of students in a Vietnamese university. The data analysis employed Miles and Huberman’s (1994) process: data reduction, data display and then the drawing of conclusions.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Research Aim**
The aim of the study was to provide new insight into the learning experiences of Vietnamese students who undertake courses designed and delivered by New Zealand lecturers in Vietnam, and the challenges facing New Zealand lecturers teaching offshore. It is hoped that the insights from this study may provide some understanding to reinterpret other studies. The next sections of this chapter will discuss the research design in light of the research questions:

1. What learning experiences do Vietnamese students have when undertaking courses designed and delivered by New Zealand lecturers?
2. What are the teaching experiences of New Zealand lecturers teaching in this offshore programme?
3. How do participants attempt to address the learning and teaching challenges in an offshore programme?

**Significance of Qualitative Research**
Qualitative research traces its origins in disciplines of humanity and the social sciences evolving over the last two centuries (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). In addition, Zajda (2005) further states that qualitative research in
interpretivist in nature and incorporates an understanding of the epistemologies of the ‘subject’ of any educational research into the actual research design. Viewed this way, qualitative research concerns itself with issues of social phenomena and human relations, an outlook that this study aligns itself with. According to Saratakos (2005), qualitative research is commonly used to gather detailed data, generally from a small number of participants. There are a variety of approaches that may be considered for conducting a qualitative research project, with the research question largely responsible for shaping the approach selected. However, the researcher’s preferences and experience also exert a significant influence on the methodology chosen. As such, the author’s background in academic programme and research administration in higher education, with years of experience working with both academics and international students, influenced the methodology of choice.

In addressing these questions, this study adopts a qualitative research approach. The research questions are open-ended, perspective and culturally bound. This study sought to use a qualitative case study design which focused on the specific learning experiences of learners and lecturers in a New Zealand university’s offshore computing degree. A qualitative case study seemed to the author to be a suitable methodology. This study employed the interpretivist case study approach which is associated with a qualitative research method. The decision to employ a suitable methodology was critical. As Hollway and Jefferson (2000) point out, the methodology is critical to the milieu of a study as it provides a framework through which information is gathered, aggregated and analysed. In this study, surveys could have been useful in determining both students’ and lecturers’ expectations and experiences in the joint degree programme in Vietnam, and the differences in learning and teaching approaches between the West and the East. While this information would have provided some insight into the learning and teaching experiences of participants, it would not have offered a deeper understanding of the cultural aspects which may have influenced the
learning and teaching experiences. Consequently, a survey was not developed for this study.

**Interpretivist Approaches**

A qualitative perspective in general can use a range of lenses such as in the interpretivist. Walsham (1995) discussed the vehicle for interpretivist investigations are often the in-depth case studies which, in the earlier stages, create an initial theoretical framework that takes into account previous knowledge. Walsham (1995) also emphasis that it is desirable in interpretivist studies to preserve a considerable degree of openness to the field data, and a willingness to modify initial assumptions. The process of interpretation requires a framework through which people’s experiences can be understood. The interpretivist framework utilised within the present study was provided by pedagogy. From a pedagogic perspective, it is recognised that experience, memories and accounts are filtered through the subjective experience of the person.

For these reasons, an interpretivist framework was adopted in the study and the case study appears to be the most appropriate investigative strategy to answer the research questions. As Merriam (1998) suggested, the case study approach results in a rich and holistic account of the phenomenon. Educational processes and problems can be examined to bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practice. The aim of this study was to provide insights into learning and teaching experiences in a cross-cultural setting as a way of increasing understandings that may affect and/or improve practice in an offshore university.

Interpretivist sees a “reality for us is an inter-subjective construction of the shared human cognitive apparatus” (Walsham, 1995, p.75). A research project which studies people interacting with each other,
artefacts, and the environment fits appropriately within a paradigm that focuses on the interpretations and meanings that people apply (Walsham, 1995). Interpretivist is characterised by a belief that reality is constructed, as opposed to it being eternally the same for all observers. As a consequence, there is no longer a “wall” between the observer and what is observed. Interpretative work no longer starts with a hypothesis and defines variables to manipulate; rather, it uses existing theory to develop a research question and then examines the research question though data collection and analysis.

Case Study
Gillham (2000) describes a case refers to an individual which can be a group or an institution. It is an empirical enquiry method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the object of study and the context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2003). Similarly, Collis and Hussey (2009) defined case study as an extensive study of a single instance of a phenomenon of interest. Furthermore, Dul and Hak (2008) simplified the definition of case study as the study of a case(s) in a real life situation and a qualitative analysis of the data that are obtained from these cases.

Yin (2003) suggested that a case study allows the researcher to show the significance of history, and “it retains a sense of the real person or people who are being spoken about” (p.13). As the aim of the study was to examine the experiences of lecturers and learners within the context of their educational and cultural background as they participate in an intercultural encounter, this form of inquiry was considered to lend itself to research of this type. Furthermore, Yin (2003) suggested that a case study is particularly suited to situations in which it is impossible to separate the phenomenon from their context. In this study, it was anticipated that each of the individual learners and lecturers would bring their own set of variables with them into the experience. Therefore, the
assumption was that it would be impossible to separate the participants’ educational, cultural background and other variables from the phenomena of learning and teaching experiences in an inter-cultural environment.

The aim of the case study methodology in qualitative research is to provide an open and flexible research approach to a social phenomenon, in a way in which the participants are integral to the interpretation of the phenomena observed. The advantage of a case study is its ability to show links between individuals’ experiences and the phenomena as a whole (Stake, 1994). For this study, the focus was on examining the meaning of the individual experiences for both lecturers and learners, and exploring how their cultural background and educational experiences influenced them and how they were influenced by overall experiences of learning and teaching experiences when inter-culturally encountered. This study examines different voices and perspectives of New Zealand lecturers and offshore students, to help create meaning, whilst considering the cultural, social and historical contexts surrounding learning and teaching in higher education.

This research explores the experiences of learners and lecturers in an offshore programme, so a case study was the logical option for a research method. Gerring and Seawright (2008) described the case study as a “definitional morass” (p.17) and offered their own version. “A case study may be understood as the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is – at least in part – to shed light on a larger class of cases” (p.20). The definition suggests that the case study was appropriate for this research as it was centred on a single case.
Yin (2003) provided a detailed definition of a case study in five parts. The following table compares Yin’s definition and the characteristics of this study.

Table 3.1. A comparison of Yin’s (2003) definition of case study with this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yin’s definition:</th>
<th>This study:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context.</td>
<td>Explore the experiences of lecturers and learners in an offshore programme in Vietnam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is helpful when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.</td>
<td>The learners and lecturers’ experiences cannot be abstracted from the context – institution, culture and people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points.</td>
<td>The experiences of learners and lecturers may involve many different factors that outstrip the ability to capture specific data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relies on multiple sources of evidence with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion.</td>
<td>The sources of information from different perspectives (learners / lecturers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis.</td>
<td>The research has benefited from the Miles and Huberman (1994) data collection and analysis method: data reduction, data display and the drawing of conclusions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

METHODS
The methods used in this study drew on case study methodology and incorporated a combination of two approaches: semi-structured interviews with the lecturers (Appendix F) and journals recorded by the Vietnamese students over a period of six weeks.
Sampling Selection
All lecturers who had teaching experiences in the offshore programme were initially considered for inclusion by the author. However, the invitation to participate went to lecturers of New Zealand European ethnicity. The rationale for seeking participants with New Zealand European ethnicity was based on the need of the present study with regards to exploring the teaching and learning experiences between the Western (New Zealand) and Eastern (Vietnam) countries. Secondly, the selection criteria also required lecturers to have had more than one year's experience teaching in Vietnam, and to have taught at the New Zealand university for over 2 years. In the end, there were three participants who consented to participate in the research.

There were a large number of students enrolled in the offshore programme in Vietnam. Selection criteria were first narrowed down to the group of students who were completing final year papers of the joint computing degree. The rationale was that this group of students would have already studied at the host university for at least 2-3 years, and would have already had learning experiences with the New Zealand lecturers for at least one semester. This group of students would have had experiences in learning with both local and foreign lecturers, and therefore be able to make a comparison. Secondly, this group of students, as they reached the final year of the degree, would also have been familiar with the online learning environment such as Blackboard™ where they recorded their learning experiences as the preferred method. Moreover, it would be expected that the students would be sufficiently competent in English to participate in the study.

Students' university email addresses were retrieved from the student management system; permission was gained from both the New Zealand and the Vietnam universities before an invitation to participate was sent out. A number of follow ups were sent to students by the administrators
of the Vietnam university and the researcher to encourage the students to participate. Seven students volunteered.

Three interviews with lecturers and reflective journals/blogs from seven students were included in the study. It would have been desirable to recruit more students to share their learning experiences with New Zealand lecturers, as the advantage of a bigger sample would have been the ability to gain more information of learners learning experience. Seven students consented to participate, a possible reason for the relatively small number of student participants could relate back to the cultural expectations that people do not voice their opinions (Pears, 2010). In addition, some students were unable to participate in the study due to having other assignments to complete at the same time.

**Interviews and Learning Journals**

Interviews with the lecturers were conducted in a formal setting either in the lecturer’s office or in a meeting room of the New Zealand university. There were no visitors or phone calls permitted during the interview. An appointment was made with the lecturers a week prior to the interview; the participation consent form and possible interview questions were also given to the participants when the appointment was made.

It was decided that Vietnamese student participants would record their learning experiences online using Blackboard™, but a journal would also be accepted via email if the students were more comfortable emailing rather than blogging.
METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The data collection instrument chosen was the semi-structured interview with New Zealand lecturers and journal recording by Vietnamese students.

Interviews

Interviews allow the researcher access through words to an individual’s constructed reality and interpretation of his or her own experience (McDonald, 2000). In-depth interviews enable the researcher to seek an understanding of participants’ perspectives of their experiences or situations through repeated face-to-face encounters (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). This study gathered data through semi-structured interviews with New Zealand lecturers.

Semi-structured Interview

The semi-structured interview has specific topic areas that need to be covered during the interview. However the order of the questions and the wording are left to the discretion of the interviewer (Bryman, 2001). This offers researchers the flexibility to respond immediately to issues raised by participants, and allows the participants to discuss issues considered to be important to them. The interviewer, however, remains focused on collecting data to ensure that research questions (2) and (3) are answered. In this study, data were collected from interviewing three New Zealand lecturers who delivered the course in the offshore programme in Vietnam.

Three lecturers were interviewed. The possible interview questions (Appendix F) were provided to the participants prior to the interview, to enable participants to reflect upon their teaching experiences with the Vietnamese students. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in Auckland, New Zealand. The proposed length of the interview was
approximately 30-40 minutes for each interview. The interviews for each participant took place separately. The tone of the interviews was conversational; it focused on the areas of teaching experiences with Vietnamese students in the offshore programme, as well as intercultural communication experiences and reflections. The three interviews lasted 20 minutes, 50 minutes and 75 minutes. The interviews followed the direction of what was expected by the author in general, and data gathered were analysed to answer the research questions. The findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

Permission to record the interview was gained from the participants (Appendix D). All three interviews were audio taped. Brief notes were taken during and after each interview to record tones of narrative, facial expressions, and body languages. The notes, in conjunction with the raw data, helped inform the analysis of the data and form themes later in the research process.

Interviews were transcribed by an independent transcriber who signed an agreement of confidentiality (Appendix G). Transcripts were sent to participants for verification before the data were used in the data analysis phase.

**Journals**

Due to different cultural expectations about expressing their views publicly, Vietnamese student participants who may not be familiar with voicing their needs, and may be bound to the culturally-situated distance between students and teachers, may hesitate in telling their real needs individually (Hitchcock, 2009). This is one of the reasons why the author decided to use an online journal via a Blackboard™ intranet, rather than use a face-to-face interview to explore learners’ perspectives. This helped to leave space for students to contribute individual points of view.
Using journal recording, the study was therefore an attempt to respond to the need to interpret unheard voice or unperceived values related to Vietnamese students’ learning experiences in the offshore programme. In addition, the journal recording methods allowed students to record their learning experience in a flexible timeframe convenient to them. The student participants were provided with a journal template, as it was believed that, in doing so, it would be more convenient to reflect on their learning issues they faced and strategies they adopted to overcome the learning issues.

The online journal recording was modified during the data collection phase, which made journal recording sent via email also acceptable as a method to encourage participation. The attempt to have insight into Vietnamese students’ voices remains limited owing to the commonly held belief that teachers are traditionally considered the knowledgeable expert (Hofstede, 1986). More importantly, students may be constrained in expressing their real needs as the Vietnamese value a sense of community as the essential spirit that individual needs come after the needs of the community (Biggs, 1996). This means that personal attitudes and needs of the Vietnamese students may not match with those of the majority or their community. Therefore, strategies were needed to help students understand that they would benefit and not be disadvantaged if they discussed their real needs; and their personal opinions would be valued rather than judged. Having the online blog / journal recording for students to use at their own pace and in their own timeframe worked well.

A group was set up online on Blackboard™ named “Learning Experiences of Vietnamese Students”. Once the consent form was received, participants were added to the organisation where their learning experiences were recorded. The privacy of the blog was strict and participants were not able to view each other’s material, but the
researcher was able to see all posts. Materials were downloaded from the group at the end of the participation period. Participation was also accepted if the journals were sent via email.

Student participants were given a guide on journal recording (Appendix E) and instructions to access the blog that was set up on Blackboard™. They were instructed to maintain a reflective journal during the participation period which ran parallel with the data collected from interviews. The journals included learning experiences with New Zealand lecturers, intercultural communication challenges that the students encountered, and personal reflection of events from their perspective. The journal was expected to provide a source of information that would be analysed and used to answer research questions (1) and (3).

METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

In qualitative analysis, the analyst is required to “create or adopt concepts relevant to the data rather than to apply a set of pre-established rules” (Merriam, 1998, p.165). After the interviews and journals recordings were completed, the thematic analysis was adopted in this study in order to identify the “recurring messages that pervade the situation.” (Eisner, 1991, p.104), this process was divided into three phases: 1) data reduction, 2) data display, 3) data conclusion.

Data Reduction

The phase of data reduction, using interview transcripts and journals, sought to simplify and organise data into more easily manageable components (Punch, 1998). The process of analysis began by reading and viewing the interview transcripts and the journals in order to get a sense of what was said by each participant about their teaching and learning experiences in the offshore programme. In order for the author to familiarise herself with the raw data collected from both sub-groups of
participants, the preliminary analysis started after each interview and during the students’ participation period.

Audio recordings of the interviews were listened to after each interview, which provided the opportunity to become familiar with the narratives, and with aspects that required clarification or further attention. This process enabled reflection on the lecturers’ teaching experiences offshore recorded during the interview and the author’s own experience of being with the interviewee. This process deepened reflection and allowed the opportunity for ideas to be generated, which lead to the themes later in the process. Each interview transcript was read and re-read and common experiences were highlighted to assist with the identification of the themes that were beginning to emerge.

Students’ learning experiences recorded on the blog or emailed were monitored. Raw data was sorted into the areas of learning experiences with New Zealand lecturers, and intercultural communication challenges and adaptations to those challenges. The author looked for common experiences shared between the participants, which helped to identify the themes.

**Data Display**

Data display phase maps and data clusters were turned into visual representations of how categories relate to each other, and these helped to identify the themes. Data were then organised into tables and compared between the two sub-groups - students and lecturers.

Although each interview and journal appeared to have varied teaching and learning experiences, common themes began to emerge across the two sub-groups. This suggested it might be possible to structure the
material into three categories. It was identified that themes emerged around the concept of challenging, enjoying and appreciating. This structure provided for openness to allow for different teaching and learning experiences of the participants, and also allowed for some degree of comparative discussion across the two sub-groups. This structure also fitted with the general categories in the literature review.

The areas of teaching and learning experiences offshore were looked at in order to determine how they were inter-related between participants in the two sub-groups. Taking into account the areas of (a) teaching and learning experiences, (b) intercultural experiences, and (c) reflections and adaptations, the author systematically drew out material to correspond to these areas and began to explore the possible meanings under each of the categories. It was assumed that there was a link between the teaching and learning experiences of participants, which would help to define the challenges encountered in an intercultural context, and how the participants attempted to address these challenges.

**Drawing Conclusions**

The phase of drawing conclusions and verification looked for themes emerging from the analysis of interview transcripts and journals, and sought similarities and differences emerging from a comparison across situations encountered, and looked for shared meanings. This process provided an opportunity to clarify the data and proposed themes; it was also an opportunity to evaluate how the experiences of participants were interpreted.

Merriam (1998) pointed out that it is the researcher who selects what aspects of the data to use. In order to filter the data and condense the interviews and seven journals, decisions had to be made on what to include or exclude. When data were selected for analysis, the selection
process was focused on understanding the experiences of participants and how they attempted to address the challenges they faced. Therefore, the data presented remained focused on the experiences of learning and teaching in an intercultural context.

Although each of the participants had their own story to share, a thematic framework was chosen in order to identify the differences and similarities within the cross-cultural learning and teaching experiences. The primary motivation of the study was to explore the experiences of lecturers and learners in an offshore programme in Vietnam. Taking into account the common aspects that emerged from the data, it kept pointing to the area of academic challenges, cultural challenges and adaptations.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The guidelines from the Ethics Committee were followed. In order to collect data from people, an ethics application was submitted and approved (See appendix J) by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee prior to when the data collection commenced. The research project also sought guidance from the master research supervisors. This research was approved by the Unitec Ethics Committee (UREC) on the 19th April 2012 (Appendix L), Ethics application number: 2012 – 102. The study was supported by both universities in New Zealand and Vietnam, support letters from both universities attached as Appendix H and appendix I. The author was aware of cultural sensitivity and individual views were fully respected.

All participants were given an information sheet about the research. Information sheet for lecturer is attached as Appendix C; information sheet for students is attached as Appendix A. Both lecturers and students participants were given the opportunity to ask questions prior to
signing the consent form, consent form for students participants as Appendix B and lecturers participants consent form is Appendix D.

Lastly, to ensure all participants’ confidentiality was protected, all participants were given a code as an identifier. The researcher has ensured all data were treated with respect and confidentiality. In accordance with UREC’s requirements, all data collected, such as interview recordings, interview transcriptions, journals and analysis of data are stored in locked filing cabinets on the premises of the New Zealand university. All data will be held for five years from the completion of this study.

SUMMARY
This chapter discussed the justification of employing a qualitative approach for this study; it outlined the research methodological framework for this research project and methods of data collection and analysis. In order to achieve the objectives of the project, it offered a background on how the interpretivist case study was a methodology for the research, and the analytic approaches used to interpret the data collected from two sub-groups of participants. It described details of data collection and analysis processes and procedures. It also outlined the ethics consideration of the research.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION
This chapter presents the findings from the research study. The intent for the study is to investigate the experiences of students and lecturers who have been involved in a computing degree programme offshore in Vietnam. The programme is being run by two universities, one in New Zealand and the other in Vietnam; the classes are held in Vietnam. In the following sections, the findings are discussed, it starts with relevant backgrounds of both New Zealand lecturers and Vietnamese student, and demographic data are presented. Followed by a section on students’ learning issues, principally, these include: English language difficulty, different teaching approaches to locally situate in Vietnam and distance learning. The next section presents lecturers’ perceptions of their experience in the programme including: language challenges, teaching and learning approach mismatch between New Zealand and Vietnam, academic literacy, distance teaching, lecturer and student relationship, in-direct communication and working in groups. In the last section, the learning and teaching strategies that students and lecturers adapted for solving learning and teaching issues. The findings presented in chapter 4, will lead to discussion and analysis in chapter five.

PARTICIPANTS’ Backgrounds and Demographic Data
For the study, there were two groups of participants; in one group were lecturers from a University in New Zealand, the other group included Vietnamese students at a University in Vietnam, the students are
enrolled in a Bachelor’s degree in the area of computing and information sciences joint degree.

Lecturers
The participants of the study were selected from the teaching team of computing degree at a New Zealand university and with ethnicity of one European and two European New Zealanders. Three male interviewees aged between 40 – 60 years old took part; two interviewees were senior lecturers and one a lecturer. All three interviewees were completing their doctoral qualification at the time of the interview.

Table 4.1 shows the lecturers’ academic background and overseas teaching experience with international students in New Zealand, and teaching experience overseas prior their involvement in teaching these Vietnamese students. Two lecturers have had more than 10 years teaching experience in higher education, three lecturers have had teaching experience with international students from Asian countries, including a small number of students from Vietnam. All three participants had no teaching experience overseas prior to undertaking teaching duties in Vietnam.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecturers Code</th>
<th>Higher Education</th>
<th>International Students in NZ</th>
<th>Vietnamese Students in NZ</th>
<th>Overseas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LP1</td>
<td>Over10 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LP2</td>
<td>Over 10 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>A small number of students and refugees.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LP3</td>
<td>Under 10 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>A small number.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Codes were used to protect the anonymity of participants
Students

Seven students took part in the research, although the lecturers interviewed did not necessarily teach them. Student participants were aged between 20 – 30 years old and included two female and five males. None of the students had studied abroad prior to enrolling in the collaborative programme. However, four out of seven indicated that they attended courses in Vietnam run by the institutions of Western countries such as Australia and United Kingdom. Five students indicated that they had enjoyed the learning experience with the lecturers on the programme. The courses range from IELTS, Certificate to Diploma programmes, as shown in table 4.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students Code</th>
<th>Course Attended in Vietnam</th>
<th>Studied Abroad before</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SP1</td>
<td>IELTS and Diploma in IT, course provided by an Australia institution</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP2</td>
<td>Certificate, course provided by an Australian institution</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP3</td>
<td>IELTS, course provided by a British Institution</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP4</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP5</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP6</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP7</td>
<td>IELTS, course provided by a British Institution</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Codes were used to protect the anonymity of participants

The following section presents the findings based on the seven student participants' perceptions of their experience in the programme. Key
findings relate to their academic expectations and the learning issues they encountered which included difficulties with English language, New Zealand lecturers’ teaching approach and distance learning.

STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Students were asked to provide their expectations prior to enrolling in the programme, and record their learning experience with New Zealand lecturers on the journal. In general, student participants felt that their expectations had been met in the programme. However, a number noted particular learning issues that they experienced during their participation. The three main difficulties they faced related to challenges with the English language, lecturers’ different teaching approaches and distance learning.

Academic Expectations

The majority of students believed that an internationally recognized degree would help them find a good job and facilitate future career advancement as shown in Table 4.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Expectations</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Employability</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>An International recognised IT degree</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reputation of the university</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As illustrated by the following comments.

“\textit{I really enjoy learning information technology. Studying with a foreign university can help me to approach the newest technology. I think that with an international recognized degree, I will have more chance to apply for a good job.}” \[\text{SP5}\]

“I do not need to leave my country and my family to study the programme. It is cheaper than learning abroad and I still have an international recognised degree. The reputations of both VN (Vietnam) and NZ (New Zealand) universities, and the learning environment which includes chances to learn with foreign professors and up to date knowledge about IT”. \[\text{SP2}\]

Two respondents indicated that they made their choice based on the reputations of the University providing the programme. In addition, undertaking an internationally recognized degree without leaving their homeland was seen as convenient, although it was less important to them with only two identifying it as an important factor.

\textbf{Learning Issues}

The students acknowledged their expectations were met in general. However, it was discovered that there were a number of learning issues experienced throughout their enrolment. Three main learning issues identified as shown in figure 4.1.
English Language Difficulty

All seven student participants identified difficulties with the English language as the most important learning issue facing them. Students noted that they were more used to an American accent and found it difficult to understand the New Zealand lecturers’ accents. They felt lecturers were inclined to speak too fast and too softly. The range of views is evident in the following quotes.

“The most difficult I had experience is language. Most of us felt unconfident when talking to [University] professors. At the beginning of every course, I couldn’t hear anything, the lecturers spoke too fast, I heard some words but it was not enough to understand. For example, he (a lecturer) mentioned a lots of information at the same time so I heard this information, I missed others information.” [SP2]

“Some lecturers have strange accents that make me a little bit hard to get used to it.” [SP5]

“Students afraid to communicate, especially by using English: the students with limited skills of English are really worried to present their ideas by using
English. There are 2 consequences: firstly, the lecturers do not know what the problems of students are, secondly, it is harder and harder for students to communicate with lecturer.” [SP1]

Different Teaching Approaches

Student participants noted a number of differences in their lecturers’ teaching approaches. Five out of seven students raised this was the second most disruptive learning challenge.

Students believed that the lecturers favoured a student-centred teaching approach, where critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, open discussion, classroom interaction and independent learning were encouraged. Students highlighted a number of key differences including approaches to problem solving, an emphasis on creativity, moving away from rote learning and the importance of acknowledging sources as is evident in the following.

“There is a big difference in teaching approach between VN (Vietnam) and university in New Zealand, lecturers always care about the ability of creativity and independent thinking. Their teaching approach make student have to think and resolve a problem by them self and do not copy any from any resource.” [SP3]

“Western lecturers encourage students to be more creative and think independently. They do not allow student to copy and concepts the existing sources.” [SP4]

“It was affected by the previous education so I faced with some learning challenges. It took for about a half of year to be familiar with their (New Zealand lecturers) teaching approach. When I received and did individual
assignments, write reflective report and exam. To get a good marks for these exercises each student must understand the lesson clearly and thought out, requires student have to do brainstorming not learn by heart like we usually do.”

“Academic integrity and acknowledging sources: in VN, the citation and references are not enforced as strictly as in NZ.”

Distance Learning

The model for the offshore programme in Vietnam is selection of papers offered by New Zealand, part of the undergraduate bachelor degree. The papers offered through the New Zealand university were taught offshore in Vietnam by New Zealand lecturers, which combined two weeks of block mode face-to-face delivery and subsequent online delivery using Blackboard.

Learning challenges during distance learning was a third issue: a number of students commented.

“it was hard for us to learn from distance such as discussion.”

“I prefer learning by class interaction, class interaction: student can ask easier and understand clearly.”

Students felt disadvantaged by the lack of interaction between lecturer and student. Some students felt that there was a lack of communication due to their inability to contact lecturers directly by email.
Lecturers’ Experiences of Teaching in the Programme

The following section presents the lecturers’ perceptions of their experience in the programme. There are a number of synergies between the issues highlighted earlier by teachers as well as a number of key differences. Issues highlighted by lecturers included language challenges, a mismatch between their teaching approaches and students expectations, and student’s lack of academic literacy, challenges on distance teaching and cultural related challenges.

Language Challenge

One of the most significant challenges facing lecturers in the programme was their students’ English ability. Lecturers noted students’ shyness and the difference between spoken and written English as is evident in the following extracts.

“They were often quite shy about oral presentation, but that was because of their lack of comfort ability with the English language. It really came down to language that was the biggest issue. English language ability prevents students to communicate effectively”

[LP2]

“I know I said that their English was quite good. Their reading is much better than their spoken; their reading English is the best; their written English is next, their spoken English is not so good. I mean, it’s good but their accents very difficult.”

[LP1]
Teaching and Learning Approaches

Lecturers noted that Vietnamese students were not used to a student centred teaching approach being more used to a teacher led teaching approach. Students were used to lecturers ‘just talking’ and were not used to working in groups as is evident in the following extracts.

“May be students have had a culture shock with my teaching approach. Having to stand up and having to have an opinion. I expect students to get prepared and then I ask them questions. I use a lot of group activity in the face-to-face sessions in the classroom. I discovered that in Vietnam it really took a couple or more days for the students to relax and see how that whole classroom situation worked; they were not used to this sort of active learning techniques in the classroom, working in groups and solving problems. They are used to the lecturers are typically just talking and reciting things and writing things on the whiteboard and the students are copying and listing.”

[LP3]

“The exams! They’re used to it. They’re not used to assignments, not used to group assignments, not used to classroom questioning, and discussion, and presentations.”

[LP1]

However, one lecturer participant expressed a different view, suggesting that it was lack of confidence and English ability rather than shyness that prevented students from taking an active part in group work and oral presentations.

“They love to have lecturer-student interactions, especially while they’re doing group work, so it was actually quite a pleasure to do that with them.”

[LP2]
In general, lecturers believed that the Vietnamese students' learning approaches were more attuned to a lecture type situation where they could take notes and do personal study rather than group discussion and question and answer. They also expected to have examinations rather than assignments.

Lecturer participants noted the importance of exposing Vietnamese students to a New Zealand lecturing style is in the offshore delivery programme, as this exposes Vietnamese to a more “Western” teaching style and learning approaches which was part of the reason for the programme. As a number of the students aspired to continue their study to postgraduate level overseas, lecturers felt that exposing them to a New Zealand style of teaching experiences would help prepare them for that. One lecturer put it this way.

“I would continue the same methodology (Western style of teaching), I think it’s valuable to actually do it and that’s what the Vietnamese partners have also requested.” [LP3]

The interviews with lecturers revealed that the papers offered in Vietnam were developed in New Zealand to meet New Zealand educational standards. The papers delivered offshore catered for 100% cohort Vietnamese students. The lecturers confirmed that there was very little or no modification to the course design and delivery offshore. One lecturer indicated:
“New Zealand style of teaching experience, that's what the students want too, and that's good because they're doing an undergraduate degree and many of them have aspirations to go and study Masters Degrees overseas. So I think it's excellent that they actually get that Western style of teaching experience locally so that prepares them for their future study as well.” [LP3]

The data here highlights the three lecturers’ perceptions that students expected of a lecture style delivery and their lack of experience with a more student centred approach. This finding is supported by student experiences as presented earlier in this chapter.

**Academic Literacy**

One of the challenges that the lecturers faced was the lack of referencing knowledge and skills demonstrated by students. As one lecturer participant put it, serious issues such as plagiarism were not really understood by the vast majority of students.

“We had a lot of plagiarism cases, more than any other group I've ever encountered before – and yet the plagiarism attempts were so incredibly naïve that I do not think they had ever thought about these sorts of things before….I do not think they necessarily understood that what they were doing was wrong. So it was really an issue of referencing.” [LP2]

Another lecturer highlighted the problems students faced (like their New Zealand counterparts) in critiquing the quality of information available on the internet.

“We have the same trend in New Zealand where students believe everything on the internet, they are not very good in critiquing the quality of the information.” [LP3]
Distance Teaching

Like the students, a number of the lecturers highlighted challenges associated with teaching from a distance. The tight teaching period and the amount of materials that lecturers were required to deliver, in addition, the education standards that are required by both countries were a challenge. This is illustrated in the following quotes.

“Normally a taught paper required the condensation basically of the whole semester’s work into two days. It actually meant what are going to be the important outcomes and how do we focus on these and how do I then get this across to 40 people, most of them whom do not understand what I’m saying (academically and the English language). Pretty significant hurdles that needed to be crossed over.” [LP3]

“I experimented with having collaborative technologies; using Wikis and Blogs, did not work. Because there was so much else that they had to do in their other papers and lessons. The requirements to keep up to date with a Blog was just beyond them-.the Forum worked very well by comparison ” [LP2]

Lecturers pointed out that online teaching demands more effort than face-to-face delivery; and there was no model for distance learning to draw from within the University. This creates challenges such as the huge amount of input required from the lecturer and deciding what learning outcomes were important to focus on.

“The first paper that was taught there (Vietnam), there was no other experiences to draw on, so it was entirely exploratory. Normally a taught paper required the condensation basically of the whole semester’s work into
two days...what are going to be the important outcomes and how do we focus on these and how do I get this across to 40 people, you have to be very selective in the end, you can’t expect to try and deliver everything.”  

[LP3]

“Distance teaching requires a huge amount of input from the lecturer; it’s far more than taught in a classroom, so you have to address student queries every day, several times a day, and you do not do that normally.”  

[LP2]

Relationships between Lecturer and Student

All three lecturers indicated that it was noticeable the Vietnamese students showed more respect compared to their experience of most international students from Asian countries in Auckland. Vietnamese students also showed an interest in socialising with their lecturers and expected a closer relationship. Lecturers highlighted student friendliness.

“They (Vietnamese students) tend to respect their teachers more. Even though they treat you with respect, they’re still very, very friendly. Maybe that’s because I’m a foreign teacher, but their focus, their dedication, their friendliness was a pleasure. If you compare it with teaching here, none of that happens, students think of nothing of their teachers. You get a closer working relationship (with the students) because you are teaching in their environment and they appreciate the fact that you have gone there to set up a programme, to go to their home, their location, to teach them, whereas, the foreign students are more demanding, they’ve come here and demand their money’s worth, I guess.”  

[LP1]

“They show their respect in a different way, so whereas in terms of the perhaps the Chinese and the Vietnamese approach, which is to show respect is not to stand up and make yourself heard. They do not challenge you; they accept what you’re saying as the truth. They love to have lecturer- student
interactions, especially while they’re doing group work, so it was actually quite pleasure to do that with them. They like to receive confirmation that what they’re thinking is the right thing as opposed to what they’re doing is the right thing.”

One lecturer noticed that it seemed more acceptable in Vietnam for the relationships between students and lecturers to be more like that of a family.

“I got repeated invitation to go out but usually it was at the end of a long day. I think it’s more of a community based thing as opposed to a social thing? It’s probably an extension of the family relationship thing which is very strong in Vietnam”

In-direct Communication

Lecturers did not identify particular cultural related issues. However, some noted a number of differences in communication that related to culture.

One lecturer’s view about Vietnamese students was that it appears the Vietnamese people have different ways of communicating than the Westerners.

“They had a different way of saying no. It is very difficult to get a direct “no”, they do not want give you a negative response, so normally there will be a roundabout answer. Once you know how it works, then it’s fine. It’s very difficult to get a direct ‘no’, a negative response from Vietnamese staff and students. They do not want to directly give a negative answer, so normally there will be a roundabout answer. That influences the way we set up
questions if the activity is to critique, the students are expected to go against the material they are given”

Working in Groups

And also, lecturers noticed that the Vietnamese students showed strong capability of working in a group situation that focused on achieving a common goal. They also tend to move together in groups. As one lecturer described it:

“the (project) students (in New Zealand) pretty much from the first day of the project in a sort of silent negotiation to bring the requirements down. Very seldom they achieve the original outcomes of the project. The students look at the teaching hours, study hour associated with the project, and they say, ‘I've now finished my hours – the project is not finished but so what, give me my grade. The Vietnamese students on the other hand, they totally ignore the hours and they do whatever they can do try to get to the end, they are very upset when they can't. They (Vietnamese students) seem to behave like that, that could be group thing; when they are in a group, they try to achieve the result, and it’s an embarrassing thing if they can’t achieve, that's probably one of the biggest differences.”

Another lecturer enjoyed the students’ enthusiasm and the ‘noise’ that characterised student working on completing their assignment task.

“In terms of group work in the classroom? I found them to be very enthusiastic, actually. You set the group up, you gave them their task, you told them their time limit, and then they just jumped straight into it basically. Noisily.”
Overall, lecturers who participated in the study, only one had previous exposure to the Vietnamese culture in the host country and two lecturers had very little experience in working with Vietnamese people prior to teaching in Vietnam. However, the lecturers enjoyed the teaching experiences with Vietnamese students and appreciated the opportunity to learn the culture.

“I enjoyed it, I’d prefer to teach there than here (New Zealand). I think the reason is that the students are much more appreciative.” [LP1]

“I enjoyed it. It was great! Loved the people, love the food. I think coming from a country like New Zealand and having lived in Auckland for quite a few years – that’s central Auckland – you have to learn to be accepting of lots of different cultures and open to them. I did not have any difficulty with deciding to be open to what the Vietnamese people had to offer, which was great. Yeah, excellent, amazing, brilliant. Thank you, show me more. It was an opportunity for me to learn.” [LP2]

STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING LEARNING AND TEACHING CHALLENGES

Learning Strategies
It was evident that some students recognised the challenges they faced during enrolment in the programme. Students commented that apart from English language difficulties, they felt that they were not familiar with presentations. One participant recorded in his journal saying that it took him about half a year to become familiar with the New Zealand lecturers’ teaching approach such as class interaction, oral presentations, and group assignments. In addition, students found self-study was a challenge. However, students showed a willingness to accept the New Zealand lecturers’ teaching approaches, and came up with strategies to
address those learning challenges as they saw that this would benefit them in further study at the Master’s level overseas.

Four students spoke of the different strategies they adopted to overcome the learning challenges, while the rest of the students did not specify whether they had made any attempt.

Two students tried to improve their English through practising more with the lecturers, reading more English articles, and attending additional English classes. A couple of other students preferred discussing the issues and seeking advice from lecturers on how to improve their English language ability.

“I got problems at the beginning. I have to try to improve it myself, like taking notes of my mistakes, try to be more confidence when talking or doing presentation. On the other hand, I had chance to learn with foreigner before, and my English was not too bad, so it was not quite hard for me to adapt those challenge.” [SP5]

Some other students have chosen to welcome the learning experience with their New Zealand lecturers, discuss learning issues with lecturers on discussion board and voice their needs in learning. As commented by students SP2 and SP1.

“To deal with those challenges, I have tried to discuss to lecturers as much as possible. Therefore, they helped me to improve my English skills as well as the presentation skill. I have also relied to read a lot of newspapers and other materials in English. Thus, I have understood their respects and views gradually.” [SP2]
“The paper should have some case studies and practical examples from VN (Vietnam). Thus, the students will be easier to reflect the learnt theories to the actual situations.” [SP1]

Teaching Strategies

Utilise Information Communication Technologies

Lecturers also attempted a number of ways to address the teaching challenges they encountered. In response to the challenges relating to distance teaching and learning, one lecturer tried to use technologies such as video conference to enhance communication in distance learning and teaching. He commented:

“On the day to day communication with the students, we really use the same methodologies: email, group online, [University] online, discussion forums. The way we teach is in the block model, there is a lot of a longer period between the two blocks that students do not physically see us, but I run a weekly video conference lecture, that covers the same on-going communication.” [LP3]

In contrast, another lecturer felt that video conference did not really work well in distance teaching but preferred e-books.

“I'm not so convinced that things like conference calling, or video, is in any way going to increase their learning opportunities than by having things that are perhaps delivered as e-books.” [LP2]

Another lecturer felt that collaborative technologies such as Wikis and Blogs did not work largely because the requirement to keep up to date
with a blog was just beyond the students’ capacity. He felt the opportunity to use the Forum worked well. This was because students were forced to interact with each other and 30% of the assignment was based on this participation.

**Modify Delivery Methods**

Some lecturers felt there had been benefits as a result of the online paper delivery which involved running papers in Vietnam at a different semesters as in New Zealand. Instead, to run papers offshore concurrently and integrating the Vietnamese and the New Zealand students into the same semester programme. As he puts it:

“We ran it concurrently, mixing the Vietnamese students and the New Zealand students up in the same semester so that they are all doing the paper at the same time. I wanted to do that, to see how the Vietnamese students would respond to the New Zealand-based students who are a mixture of various nationalities. And how the New Zealand based students would respond to Vietnamese students, given that they are coming from a more largely mono-cultural environment. And it was quite interesting to see them mix in actually, and how their views – the exchange of the view – altered and changed during the semester.” [LP2]

**Support from Teaching Assistance**

All lecturers noted the importance of the support from the university in Vietnam and the presence of teaching assistants in each of papers delivered offshore. Lecturers agreed this was hugely beneficial to Vietnamese students because the teaching assistants have already done the paper and were able to share their learning experience with the students, which helped to engage them with learning. Two lecturers explained it this way.
“it is very important is to have a good teaching assistant who is the first point of contact for the students, that way they have instant feedback – sometimes faster than from myself”

“What additional support they needed was in terms of their learning for these particular papers that we delivered there. Having him (the teaching assistant) there that was hugely beneficial to those students, because he (the teaching assistant) had already done the paper. He was able to tell them about his experiences on the paper, this meant that they then got more engaged with their learning. It's easy when they are doing off-site learning to lose engagement.”

It was evident from the comments, that the teaching assistance based in Vietnam had a significant effect in supporting students with their learning needs; it also helped the students to overcome the language barrier and the difficulties of distance learning.

**Online Learning Resources to Support Distance Learning**

One of the recommendations made by the lecturers is that the New Zealand university should provide more resources to support distance learning. One lecturer recommended:

“I think the university needs to provide online resources for distance learning students. The kind of material that they get in the KEYS programmes now, it should be delivered online too”

It was clear that the New Zealand lecturer recommended that the university’s KEYS programme run by the university library should be
made available to students in Vietnam online in conjunction with the degree programme. Lecturers further explained that the KEYS programme is a series of short courses in relation to academic writing, presentation and critical thinking, the lecturers believed the programme will be a good introduction to academic literacy.

**SUMMARY**

In this chapter findings were presented from semi–structured interviews conducted with three academics and seven journals recorded by student participants in Vietnam over a period of 6 weeks. The interviewees were two senior lecturers and a lecturer. One of those interviewed was the Programme Leader of the undergraduate degree at the time the collaborative teaching started. Students were recruited from final year students. The main themes concerning learning and teaching issues and strategies that adapted by learners and lecturers in the offshore programme, which emerged from the data are centred were: English language, different teaching and learning approaches, distance learning, communication and cultural related experiences. Table 4.4 summarised the key findings of this study.

| Learning challenges | • English language difficulties  
|                    | • New Zealand lecturers’ teaching approach.  
|                    | • Distance learning  

| Teaching Challenges | • Students English language capability  
|                    | • Teaching and learning approach mismatch  
|                    | • Distance delivery impacted on delivery methods  
|                    | • Cultural related experience.  

| Strategies adopted | Learning strategies:  
|                   | • Practice English more, attend additional  

Table 4.4. Summary of Key Findings
English course; read more (English) newspapers /articles to understand the westerner’s view.

- Discuss learning issues with lecturers on Blackboard.
- Voice learning needs.

Teaching strategies:
- Utilise technologies to enhance communication in distance learning
- Modify delivery methods
- Support from teaching assistance
- Online learning resource support distance learning.

Communication and cultural experiences

Lecturers noticed the Vietnamese students:

- Interested in socialising with lecturers.
- Expected a closer work relationship with their lecturers.
- Indirect communication.
- Work well in group tasks.

The overall results indicated for this group was that apart from the English language issues, the Vietnamese students also experienced the New Zealand lecturers’ teaching approach was more student centred. This was different to what they used to due to their cultural and previous educational background. The majority of Vietnamese student participants admitted that their learning experience with New Zealand lecturers was more independent learning, where lecturers encourage critical thinking and creativities, which impacted their learning. However, it appears there was an acceptance of New Zealand lecturers’ teaching approaches and preference for a more open and global style of learning experience in the Western context.
Similarly, the lecturers expressed their concerns about the students’ English language capability, which appeared to prevent them from learning and progressing as they would have liked to. Lack of critical thinking, creativities and academic literacy from Vietnamese students was identified being the most challenge to teaching offshore.

Participants noted the more demanding nature of distance learning when compared to a face-to-face course delivery. Although, distance teaching created challenges for the New Zealand lecturers, it also opened up an opportunity for the New Zealand lecturers to explore further the use of information communication technologies.

In both groups, the majority of participants had attempted to address the issues and challenges encountered. Overall, lecturers noted that although it required a lot more effort to teach from a distance, there were some significant hurdles to be crossed in distance teaching. However, it had been an interesting and an enjoyable experience.
CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION
This chapter will discuss the significance of the findings of this study in relation to the literature.

Research questions provide a framework for the discussion, which is supported by the literature reviewed in chapter two, and the experiences of lecturers and learners in the offshore programme in Vietnam are explored. Learning and teaching issues and challenges encountered in the offshore programme are discussed, including the English language difficulties, different teaching and learning approaches between universities in New Zealand and Vietnam, and difficulties in distance teaching and learning. Adaptations to learning and teaching strategies are discussed. The last section looks at issues and challenges encountered in the offshore learning and teaching context. In addition, issues relating to cultural awareness and inter-cultural competency in offshore teaching are considered.

LEARNING AND TEACHING EXPERIENCES IN AN OFFSHORE PROGRAMME
This section explores the issues and challenges that learners and lecturers faced in the offshore programme in Vietnam. Each group was asked what issues and challenges they experienced in offshore teaching and learning. The common themes that arose were: the learners’ English
language ability, New Zealand lecturers’ teaching approach mismatched the students’ learning approach in Vietnam, and issues in distance teaching and learning.

Learners’ Academic Expectations
Questions were posed to participants to uncover the expectations of, and motivations for enrolling in the New Zealand university’s offshore degree. The study found there were three reasons that influenced the students:

- An internationally recognised IT degree would enhance their employability.
- Convenience.
- Reputation of the overseas university.

Principally, Vietnamese students enrolling in the course wanted to study an internationally recognised degree. All seven respondents believed an internationally recognised IT degree would assist them in finding a good job and advancing their career. This supports both Wilkins et al. (2012) and Zimitat’s (2008) research; they found that many Asian students were motivated to study an international degree because they believed that an international education and a foreign qualification would better prepare them for a career in the international labour market. The Vietnamese students also indicated that completing an internationally recognised degree without leaving their homeland was convenient because they could still be with their family while studying. This study showed that students were less concerned about the reputation of overseas universities. This runs contrary to popular belief that it is the reputation of the awarding institution that is the primary attraction for Asian students. The findings supported those found in a report (Sharma, 2012) released by the British Council’s Education Intelligence Unit in 2012. The survey was based on 160,000 students’ responses; it ran from 2007 until September 2012. The survey found that students intending to study for a transnational education degree valued the combination of study and
employment more than the reputation, brand or ranking of the awarding institution. However, this is not to say that the Vietnamese students did not care about the reputation of the New Zealand university; it was just not the most important factor.

**Learning Issues**

Three main learning issues were identified, including English language issues, different approaches in teaching and learning between New Zealand and Vietnam, and distance teaching and learning issues.

**English Language Difficulty**

One of the significant learning issues, as described by two of the lecturers, was that the Vietnamese students had a tendency to associate their learning difficulties mainly with their English language ability. One lecturer noticed the Vietnamese students’ English reading skills were the strongest, their writing skills were their second strongest area, and their oral language skills were the weakest. All students admitted that they struggled with English during their first enrolment in the programme. This is because the offshore programme was conducted in English. This is supported by Wilkins et al. (2012) who suggested that a student’s English language ability usually has a significant impact on their overall academic attainment and level of satisfaction.

There was evidence that some students felt it was difficult to understand the lecturers at the beginning of the course, as some students felt the New Zealand lecturers had strong accents because the students were used to the American accent. Others commented that the lecturers sometimes spoke too fast and their voices were soft. This was further confirmed by one student who commented that students were afraid to communicate with the lecturers because they were concerned about their
own limited English language skills. This prevented them from communicating with their New Zealand lecturers and presenting their ideas effectively. As a result, it was apparent that all students struggled with English at the beginning of the course and experienced frustration and concern. A number of Vietnamese students suggested that setting an English standard or testing students’ English levels prior to enrolling students in the programme would enhance their learning experience; students would have similar standards and be able to share knowledge and ideas.

**Learning and Teaching Approach Mismatch**

This study found that the majority of Vietnamese students had high expectations of academic success when they enrolled in the course offered by the New Zealand university. However, many students experienced learning challenges when they discovered the New Zealand lecturers’ emphasis on communication, problem-solving ability, and creativity, rather than just passing exams.

Students in this study noted significant differences in the teaching approaches of their New Zealand lecturers compared to their Vietnamese lecturers. This finding relates to literature (Song-Turner & Willis 2011; Thanh, 2011), and it is significant because it suggests that the teaching approach in Vietnam is more teacher-centred and students’ achievement is measured through examinations, which is typical of Asian countries’ education systems (Thanh, 2011).

Observations from New Zealand lecturers were that the Vietnamese students were used to a teacher-centred approach, and that most students believed that to succeed in examinations, students needed to reproduce lectures and information covered in textbooks (Song-Turner &
This learning approach has led to conflicts with educators coming from a Western culture, such as New Zealand, where a student-centred teaching approach is encouraged. Thanh (2011) indicated that in the universities in Vietnam, a majority of students did not see some of the class activities, such as group work and presentations, as being better than their traditional practices in terms of increasing students’ academic achievement. This view was supported by the New Zealand lecturers who commented that it was the exams the Vietnamese students were used to; they were not used to group assignments, classroom questioning, discussions and presentations.

Researchers raised concerns over what may be seen as a mismatch between the Western teaching approach and the learning approach of Asian students (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Song-Turner & Willis, 2011; Thanh, 2011). The students’ concerns about New Zealand lecturers appeared to focus on critical thinking, problem solving and independent learning. This seems to relate to a mismatch between the academic expectations of students and the lecturers in the offshore programme. The New Zealand lecturers expect to encourage learners to be critical thinkers, provide opportunities for learners to question ideas and opinions, and place an emphasis on development of tools for independent learning rather than just passing exams.

A). Cultural Aspects of Learning

Lecturers in this study indicated that many Vietnamese students had difficulties coping with the teaching approaches of the NZ lecturers. Having to stand up in front of the class and having to have an individual opinion were not the class activities they were used to. One lecturer felt it took a longer time for the Vietnamese students to get used to the active learning techniques in the classroom because they were used to lecturers typically just talking, reciting and writing things on the
whiteboard while students took notes. Wong (2004) and Hitchcock (2009) had a similar view; they found that South East Asian students usually listened to lectures, intently took copious notes, and answered teachers’ questions. The New Zealand lecturers expected students to get prepared for the lecture and ask them questions. This is supported by researchers who found that South East Asian students tend to be passive and nonverbal in class, and they rarely initiate class discussions until they are called on, due to reticence and humility (Kagan, 2000). These traits are highly valued in Asian culture and seem to be congruent with the expectations as expressed by the students in this research study. This view is also seen in Hofstede’s (1996) research, which suggested that students from most Asian countries do not want to show off what they know, and they do not want to lose face if their answers are incorrect. Moreover, Hofstede (1996) also pointed out that in nations such as Vietnam, which has Confucian cultural values, questioning lecturers is regarded as disrespectful.

Some researchers have noted that Western educators frequently encounter differences in academic needs, cultural values, and learning styles when teaching in Asian classrooms (Biggs, 1996; Liu, 2008; Pears, 2010). They also note that in general, students from Asian countries expect to learn via rote memorisation and teachers’ lectures. In addition, classrooms are highly structured teacher centred environments in comparison to the more learner centred environment the lecturers in this study were used to.

Research suggests that students from Asian countries are taught to be polite and are encouraged to remain silent (Biggs, 1996; Liu, 2008 & Pears, 2010). However, there has been considerable debate within the literature, as researchers such as Sullivan (1996) have found that college students in Vietnam favoured group activities and that they were quite verbal in their English classes. Romanelli et al.’s (2009) study had a
similar outcome, as they found that Vietnamese students, unlike the general notion that Asian students were silent, responded to teachers in hesitation. This study has provided evidence of the complexities involved here as is evident in chapter four with lecturers’ noting that students are held back more by their lack of English competence that by cultural factors or other expectations. This study also identified the importance for students of social and other communications with lecturers – see chapter four. Those comments challenge Pears’ (2010) suggestion that educators teaching in offshore courses experience a lack of interaction in the classroom due to an expectation that students should be respectful to their teachers (Liu, 2008).

B). Critical Thinking and Problem solving

The lecturers in this study noted the importance of conformity and compliance with authority in the Vietnamese education system. This finding is supported by the work of Wong (2004), who noted that many Asian education systems value conformity, students usually learn better in concrete subjects but are weak in analytical thinking. However, in the contemporary economic context, the Vietnamese education tertiary system has an increasing investment in introducing “Western” teaching approaches with the goal of providing the “creative” and “innovative” advantages these approaches may offer. The finding in this study highlights some of the key tensions that emerge for lecturers and students in the university context.

In the literature review chapter, it was revealed that Asian students are assessed mainly by examination, with little emphasis on critical thinking, creativity or on solving practical problems. This is supported by Wong (2004) and Rao (2001); they believe that the Asian education system stresses the conservation and reproduction of knowledge, whereas the Western education system tends to value a speculative and questioning
approach. Furthermore, Marginson’s (2011) observations showed that nations of Eastern Asia, such as Vietnam, are generally a long way behind Western countries, such as the U.S.A, in terms of productive intellectual creativity. The New Zealand lecturers shared the view that the way to acquire knowledge and skills may differ from one culture to another. The lecturers’ emphasis was that the New Zealand education system encourages students to be critical thinkers and creative, and it often provides students with opportunities to question ideas and opinions. As a result, New Zealand universities tend to focus on developing tools for independent learning. The key driver of productive innovation has generally been assumed to be creativity, and it has been identified as a core skill that is crucial to the individual and national competitiveness that underpins economic development and prosperity (Thanh, 2011).

C). Academic Literacy

One of the significant issues identified in this study was the plagiarism that occurred in the offshore context. The New Zealand lecturers pointed out that, in most cases, the Asian students were lacking academic literacy skills and knowledge appropriate for their level of study. It appeared that many students in Vietnam were under-prepared in the area of academic literacy. This finding is supported by Burwood (1999), who noted that academic literacy skills would not improve significantly unless educators engaged with students to support and assist them with skill development at this fundamental level. Without this support, the situation has the potential to impact negatively on student needs and performance. The findings also indicated that a lack of English language skills may be an in-direct cause of plagiarism, as plagiarising is seen by some Vietnamese students as one way to pass the paper. A direct factor is that students were new to Western academic expectations, and protocols for referencing and critique were new to them.
Distance Learning and Teaching

The study noted how the New Zealand university delivering the programme depended heavily on Blackboard™ as an online teaching and learning system. Lecturers and students were expected to use tools such as email, discussion, Blogs, WIKI and forums. However, given that not all students were suited or prepared for distance learning, and that not all papers were readily taught via this form of learning, the uptake of distance learning was a challenge to students and lecturers. As noted by Wood et al. (2005), students took some time to get used to the communication methods of distance learning, and some students preferred more face-to-face teaching.

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS TEACHING AND LEARNING CHALLENGES

Strategies to Address Learning Challenges
The findings of this study identified three major learning strategies adopted by students to try to address the learning challenges they faced in the programme. The strategies included improving English language skills, recognising the different teaching approach of New Zealand lecturers, and discussing learning challenges with lecturers and voicing their own learning needs.

Improving English Language Skills.

All students realised there were significant differences to learning requirements and assessment structures from New Zealand lecturers compared to Vietnamese lecturers. The strategies that the students adopted to address their lack of language capability included more English practice with the New Zealand lecturers, reading English newspapers, and attending additional English language courses. This is supported by researchers who indicated that students' overall academic
attainment and level of satisfaction was impacted by the students’ English language ability (Balakrishnan & Huisman, 2012; Burwood, 1999; Thanh, 2011).

Recognise the Different Teaching Approaches of New Zealand Lecturers.

All of the students who participated in this study noticed the different teaching approaches of New Zealand lecturers during their enrolment in the offshore programme. The strategy that six students employed to address these challenges was to welcome the opportunity of the learning experience with their New Zealand lecturers, especially for two students who expressed interest in further study abroad. Some students tried to understand their New Zealand lecturers’ perspective of learning. For example, two students tried to discuss their challenges with lecturers face-to-face or online as much as possible, and two other students relied on reading English newspaper articles, which gradually helped them to understand the Western point of view. It was evident that learning experience can be flexible and adoptive. This is supported by Thanh (2011), who suggested that learning styles can be changed with exposure to different learning and teaching methods.

This study has challenged the view of Wong (2004) and Hofstede (1996) that students’ learning approaches are predetermined by their culture. Their view is that for a community where students are regarded as passive recipients of data, it would be difficult for lecturers to teach using a student-centred approach, and it is important to take into consideration cultural resources before applying education theories in practice. This culture-based approach contributed to the knowledge of Asian students learning preference, but it limited the ability to understand the complexities of students’ learning experiences. In this study, six out of seven Vietnamese students admitted that they welcomed the learning
opportunity with their New Zealand lecturers’ teaching approach, as they saw that the learning experience in a Western context would be beneficial for further study and employability. This researcher’s view is that learning preference is adoptive; to enhance offshore students learning experience, it is important that Western teaching approaches and learning preference are introduced into the offshore classroom.

**Learning Challenges and Learning Needs**

This study found that some students chose to discuss their learning issues on an online discussion board as a strategy to address the learning challenges. Two other students decided to voice their learning needs directly to lecturers or through student surveys. Three Vietnamese students suggested that the papers taught by New Zealand lecturers should have some case studies and practical examples from Vietnam, as the students would find it easier to apply the theories learnt to the actual situation. Students also suggested providing students with opportunities for industry-based learning, and work experience in the corporate world would be beneficial. This study showed that six out of seven students expected an internationally recognised degree with local IT industry knowledge would enhance employment opportunities. This is consistent with Wong’s (2004) view that it is important for institutions to not impose cultural colonialism and the indiscriminate use of Western theories upon offshore academics and perspective. Shams and Huisman’s (2012) study concluded that localising the curriculum, while at the same time trying to offer identical courses and learning experiences to students in their home country, was one of the biggest challenges for Western educators and institutions.

**Strategies to Address Teaching Challenges**

The findings of this study identified three major teaching strategies adopted by lecturers to try to address the teaching challenges they faced
in the programme: Use of information communication technologies; delivery methods and course material; teaching support and learning resources.

**Utilise information communication technologies**

The New Zealand university in this study used Blackboard™ as the predominant virtual learning environment. Communication tools were available and used during this study included emails, group communication, discussion boards, WIKIS and blogs. To maximise the use of information communication technologies is being investigated further.

**Delivery methods and course material**

Some researchers are concerned that the Western universities are exporting a locally developed curriculum that has not been appropriately adapted to the needs of offshore students. The danger of it is that universities selling education outside their frontiers will attempt to impose the same standards everywhere, and this will disassociate education from the social, cultural and political origins of a country (Gribble & Zigiras, 2010; James, 2000; Kelly & Tak, 1998). One of the questions needing to be addressed is whether it is possible to modify the teaching approach and course content to match the learning approaches of offshore students, while at same time ensuring offshore programmes are of acceptable quality (Biggs, 2001). Biggs (1996) suggested that changing the assessment system would be a way to help learners to adapt and to engage. This study showed that many Vietnamese students in the programme were not familiar with Western ideas, culture and business practices. Chapter six will offer a number of recommendations in regards to enhance learning experiences in the offshore programme.
Teaching support

Lecturers noted that the local teaching assistants in Vietnam played a very important role in offshore teaching. They believe that having teaching assistants was hugely beneficial to students because the teaching assistants had already passed the papers and they could share their learning experiences with the students. Furthermore, teaching assistants were the first contact point for the Vietnamese students. They provided instant feedback to students’ queries after the lecturers’ departure from Vietnam, which helped the students become more engaged with their own learning. This study’s findings support Leask’s (2004) study, which found that local tutors from the host country played a very important role in assisting the lecturers with their teaching duties. This was because offshore teaching involves a short – usually two to three weeks - intensive face-to-face block of teaching with students, with the follow-up tutorials delivered by local tutors. The local tutors, during that period of learning, also acted as cultural mediators and translators; they made the course materials accessible to the different cultural audience of the host country.

McBurnie and Ziguras (2007) found that students taught by both university lecturers and local instructors reported higher overall satisfaction with their education. However, other research (Wilkins et al., 2012) argued that there was a disadvantage to employing local staff as opposed to expatriate teachers from the country of origin of the institution, as students and parents expected that students would be taught by foreign lecturers when they enrolled in a foreign programme. This study did not investigate the role played by local teaching assistants in the offshore programme in Vietnam, so this is an area that could be addressed in future research – see Chapter six.
TEACHING EXPERIENCES IN OFFSHORE PROGRAMME

Lecturers noticed some teaching experiences offshore, which they had not experienced in New Zealand. These areas included students tended to have a closer working relationship with their lecturers, students worked well in a group situation, and in-direct communication appeared to be the students’ preferred communication style.

Working Relationships between Lecturer and Student

Thanh’s (2011) research suggested that Vietnamese students show great respect for the knowledge of their lecturers. My study supports Thanh’s (2011) view, as one lecturer described the Vietnamese students as very friendly and they treated the lecturers with respect. The lecturers believed the Vietnamese students showed their respect for them in a different way than Western students do; Vietnamese students did not challenge the lecturers, but accepted whatever the lecturers were saying as the truth; they also liked to receive confirmation that they were on the right track and that their line of reasoning was correct. This is supported by Park’s (2000) study, which suggested that the student and teacher relationship is constructed on a hierarchical basis; questioning and in-class interaction between students and teacher is restricted unless the teacher has given an indication that discussion is appropriate. Park’s (2000) study also showed that South East Asian students have distinct and diverse cultural values, such as respect for authority and a strong sense of social hierarchy. Countries with a Confucian heritage regard teacher and student relationships as similar to the father and son relationship (Hofstede, 1986). Students perceive that the responsibility for learning is between both the teacher and the student; it is the teacher’s primary responsibility to ensure that the student achieves the learning objectives (Song-Turner & Willis, 2011). LP1 added that the Vietnamese students tended to have a closer working relationship with their Western lecturers because they appreciated the lecturers had come to the students' homeland to set up a programme and to teach in their environment.
In addition, this study revealed that the Vietnamese students liked to have a close relationship with their lecturers, and showed interest in socialising with New Zealand lecturers outside the classroom. Two lecturers noticed that the Vietnamese students tended to socialise with their lecturers, which does not normally happen in New Zealand. One lecturer supported Hofstede’s (1986) and Park’s (2000) view, in that he thought a closer relationship between lecturer and student was more of a community-based system, and probably an extension of the family relationship, which is very strong in Vietnam.

**Students Working in Groups**

The lecturers noticed that in terms of group work in the classroom, the Vietnamese students showed high interest in participation. When given a group task and a time limit, they worked enthusiastically. The literature supports this view, as Park (2000) pointed out that the Vietnamese students showed a major preference for group learning, compared to other East Asian students. Hofstede (1986) also believed that the differences in learning behaviours between the West and the East could be categorised with the terms individualism and collectivism. Individualist culture assumes that any person looks primarily after their own interests and the interests of their immediate family. Collectivist culture assumes that any person, through birth and possible later events, belongs to one or more tight “in-groups” from which they cannot detach themselves. The “in-group” protects the interests of its members, but in turn expects their permanent loyalty.

**In-Direct Communication**

One lecturer noticed that the Vietnamese preferred in-direct communication; he found that it was not often the Vietnamese would say “no” to his requests; instead they would say, “yes, but …”. The difference
in communication between the West and East is mentioned in Nisbett’s (2003) Geography of Thought. It is evident that there are fundamental differences between thinking process and communication styles of Western and Eastern people. Bender-Szymanski (2000) supports Nisbett’s view, and pointed out that human beings interpret the world differently, and communications between persons of different cultures has the potential to be misunderstood if individuals interpret situations differently according to their own cultural meaning system, without being aware of the differences, and this may cause a breakdown of intercultural relations.

Inter-Cultural Awareness and Competency

Two out of the three lecturers in this study did not have overseas teaching experience and had limited teaching experience with Vietnamese students in New Zealand prior to teaching in Vietnam. This study suggests that although there were “weird” things that were noticed by the New Zealand lecturers while undertaking teaching duties in Vietnam, there was no evidence to suggest there was a cultural shock for the lecturers. It was because, as suggested by the lecturers, they had an open mind prior to their departure from New Zealand, and appreciated the opportunity to experience another culture. One lecturer felt that he did not have any difficulty with what the Vietnamese people had to offer and he saw offshore teaching as an opportunity to learn about another culture. Another lecturer mentioned that on his first trip to Vietnam, he went with a completely open mind, not knowing what to expect. This supports Le (2009) and Brown’s (2010) view. They suggested that intercultural interaction is a complex task for many of the individuals involved, and to be intercultural competent, the first thing is do is to confront the difference of cultural perspectives, then filter the messages of the host culture through their own culture, and finally, ensure that their response and reaction are appropriate. One lecturer commented that if he did not understand the intercultural differences, he would seek advice from a counterpart.
According to Padilla and Perez (2003), cultural competence is the learned ability to function in a culture in a manner that is congruent with the values, beliefs, customs, mannerisms and language of the majority of members of the culture, which is important in intercultural adaptation. This study supports Padilla’s and Perez’s (2000) view, as all lecturers admitted there was significant difference in culture between New Zealand and Vietnam. Awareness of cultural differences and willingness to learn about the host culture were the keys to become interculturally competent, which in turn would enhance professional and social relationships between lecturers and students/staff in the host university in Vietnam.

**SUMMARY**

Chapter five discussed the findings of this study by exploring the experiences of learners and lecturers in the offshore programme in Vietnam with reference to the research questions stated in chapter one and the links to the literature review in chapter two.

First, the researcher listed three main factors that influenced the students to enrol in the offshore programme. The factors were: (1) an internationally recognised IT degree would enhance their employability, (2) convenience, and (3) reputation of the overseas university. The discussion then focused on the teaching and learning challenges encountered in the offshore programme, including: (1) English language difficulty, (2) different teaching and learning approaches between Vietnam and New Zealand, and (3) distance learning and teaching.

Lecturers raised concern about the capability of Vietnamese students’ English language, which had a significant impact on the students’ overall academic attainment and their level of satisfaction. The same issues also
concerned the students as they all experienced difficulties in English language during their earlier enrolment in the programme.

It was evident that there were significant differences in the teaching and learning approach between the university in New Zealand and the university in Vietnam. The emphasis on critical thinking, problem solving and independent learning by New Zealand lecturers impacted on the students' learning as the students were used to a more teacher-centred approach and passing exams was the primary goal.

Learners and lecturers faced challenges in distance learning and teaching, which mainly related to online communication technologies and methods. It was evident that some students were still getting used to the communication methods and preferred more face-to-face interaction. The use of technologies and delivery methods were explorative from the lecturers’ perspective as there was no previous experience to draw on for distance learning within the university in New Zealand.

Second, this chapter explored the teaching and learning strategies that lecturers and students adopted to address those challenges encountered in the offshore programme. Strategies students employed included: (1) practising English more and attending additional English classes as well as reading English newspaper/articles to understand the Western point of view, (2) discussing learning issues with lecturers on discussion boards online, and (3) voicing their learning needs directly with the lecturers and through student surveys. The strategies the lecturers adopted were: (1) utilise information communication technologies, (2) delivery methods and course material, (3) using teaching assistants’ support, and (4) use of online learning resources.
Third, the chapter considered the cultural and intercultural challenges offshore. The study found that the Vietnamese students showed more social interest in their New Zealand lecturers compared to their counterparts in New Zealand, and the Vietnamese students expected a closer working relationship with their lecturers. The students worked well in groups, and in-direct communication was their preferred communication style. The study also found that although all three lecturers participated in this study had no overseas teaching experience and had very little teaching experience with Vietnamese students prior to their involvement in the offshore programme, the lecturers had an open mind as to what the Vietnamese had to offer in terms of cultural difference. The lecturers appreciated the cultural learning opportunity. It concluded that gaining intercultural competency and enhancing professional relationships with students and staff, cultural awareness, and willingness to learn the host culture were the keys to be successful in offshore teaching and learning.

The findings and discussion provide input for the conclusion, in which a final perspective is developed on the experience of learners and lecturers in the offshore programme in Vietnam.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

INTRODUCION
This chapter presents a summary of the research findings, a discussion of their implications and recommendations for future research and practice, and a consideration of the limitations of this study. The findings add to the literature currently available in New Zealand in the areas of offshore learning and teaching in Vietnam university. The findings may be useful for educators who are involved in offshore teaching, programme planning and design, paper development, and academic programme administration. Also, this study will be of interest to offshore students who have an interest in gaining an understanding of teaching approaches and methods of the New Zealand university.

RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS
The research aimed to explore learners’ and lecturers’ experiences in an offshore programme in Vietnam and identifies strategies adopted to address issues and challenges that were encountered in an intercultural context.

The data collected sought to answer the research questions:

1. What learning experiences do Vietnamese students have when undertaking courses designed and delivered by New Zealand lecturers?
2. What are the teaching experiences of New Zealand lecturers teaching in this offshore programme?

3. How do participants attempt to address the learning and teaching challenges in an offshore programme?

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study found that Vietnamese students chose to study on the programme in this study primarily because the degree is internationally recognised. In line with academic expectations of international students, students expect the quality of the programme to be higher than local universities. The Vietnamese students believed an internationally recognised qualification would benefit them by advancing their career in Vietnam. Students were attracted to being an offshore student in their homeland, while having the opportunity to acquire international perspectives on the theories and practices in the area of computing and information sciences, and to experience Western curricula and teaching approaches. The second strongest factor was the course was provided in their homeland, which was convenient and cost effective for the students. The reputation of overseas universities was the third strongest influence.

This study is a first step in understanding the learning experiences of Vietnamese students in an offshore programme taught by lecturers from a New Zealand university, and presents teaching challenges New Zealand academics faced. The findings highlight significant differences in teaching and learning approaches between the universities in Vietnam and New Zealand, which is possibly due to different cultures and education systems. English language skills presented communication challenges for students and impacted on their overall satisfaction of the learning experience. Students and lecturers described distance teaching and learning as requiring more effort than face-to-face learning and teaching. To overcome these issues, both students and lecturers
adopted different strategies for dealing with the challenges they faced. In addition, lecturers noticed that the Vietnamese showed interest in socialising with their lecturers and preferred a close working relationship, which in this field, is not common in New Zealand; Vietnamese students worked well in group situations and preferred in-direct communication compared to their counterparts in New Zealand.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

**Learning and teaching challenges in the offshore programme.**

This section deals with key learning and teaching challenges facing students and lecturers in the offshore programme in Vietnam. Three main learning issues and teaching challenges were identified that include students’ English language capability, different approaches to teaching and learning between New Zealand and Vietnam, and distance teaching and learning issues.

*English language challenges for students.*

There is evidence that all students who participated in the study struggled with English when they first enrolled, which led to frustration and anxiety. Students felt some New Zealand lecturers had strong accents, that sometimes the lecturers spoke too fast, and their tones were too soft. The lecturers were concerned about the students’ limited English language skills, which prevented the students from communicating and presenting their ideas effectively. It was evident that English language fluency had a significant impact on students’ overall academic attainment.
Learning and teaching approach mismatch.

The Vietnamese students were not prepared for the teaching style preferred by the lecturers from New Zealand. Papers offered in Vietnam have been developed in New Zealand to meet New Zealand educational standards and to fit into the New Zealand university’s (domestic) curriculum. The components of assessments are student-centred, with emphasis on critical thinking, problem solving and creativity. By contrast, Vietnamese students were used to a teacher-centred approach common to Vietnam, where students’ achievement is measured primarily through examinations.

Research suggests, for example (Hitchcock, 2009, Pears, 2010), that in the classroom, Asian students are not outspoken and there is lack of a interaction between lecturers and students. New Zealand lecturers confirm the view of Sullivan (1996) and Romanelli et al. (2009) that college students in Vietnam are quite verbal in class and respond to lecturers’ queries in chorus. It was concluded by the lecturers, Sullivan (1996) and Romanelli et al (2009), that the Vietnamese students’ shyness about oral presentations was because of their lack of comfort with the English language rather than cultural differences; when the lecturer engaged with students, they participated well in the class. Therefore, this study supports the view, which suggests that educators with a knowledge of learning approaches can tailor pedagogy so that it best coincides with learning styles exhibited by students (Holmes, 2005; Valiente, 2008; Zhang & Brunton, 2007). On the other hand, students with knowledge of their own learning preferences are empowered to use various techniques to enhance learning, which in turn may impact overall educational satisfaction. It is further confirmed that the ability to recognise the differences in teaching and learning approaches is critical and useful when the teaching approach does not match the student’s learning preference.
The lecturers’ observations support Wong’s (2004) and Hitchcock’s (2009) view that Vietnamese students are weak in critical thinking, as well as analytical and academic literacy skills. The lecturers hoped that the introduction of the New Zealand teaching approach to students in Vietnam would benefit the students.

**Issues related to distance learning and teaching**

All lecturers admitted that the same methods used for face-to-face teaching were used in day-to-day online communication with the students. Communications depended heavily on Blackboard™, an online learning management system. However, given that not all students were suited or prepared for distance learning, the uptake of distance learning was a challenge for both the students and the lecturers.

**Adaptations to Learning and Teaching Challenges.**

Strategies employed by students include attendance of additional English courses, practising and reading English to understand the Western point of view, discuss learning issues with lecturers on online discussion boards, and expressing learning needs both with lecturers and through student surveys. The strategies lecturers included action of information communication technologies, modification of delivery methods and course material, use of teaching assistants’ support, and online learning resources.

**Cultural Awareness and Intercultural Competency.**

New Zealand lecturers noticed the Vietnamese students performed well in groups, preferred an in-direct communication style, showed interest in socialising with the lecturers, and expected to have a closer working relationship with their lecturers. In addition, the lecturers appreciated the cultural learning opportunity. This study concluded that gaining
intercultural competency, enhancing professional relationships with students and staff, cultural awareness, and a willingness to learn about the host culture were the keys to enhancing teaching and learning experiences.

**IMPLICATIONS**

The study identifies a number of key issues. First, students’ English capability is of concern as has been demonstrated to have significant impact on students’ learning capacity and level of satisfaction with the programme. It may be that locally based international students have an advantage over offshore students; they are required to improve language skills because they are immersed in a new culture and language. Offshore students do not have the same exposure to English through their studies, and often, additional language support is required. There is an expectation that graduates from offshore in Vietnam, will be able to apply that knowledge in English. While anecdotal evidence suggests this may lead to future difficulties for the students who undertake the offshore programme, this is a topic that needs to be researched further. The reputation of the overseas university is one of the factors that influence students to enrol in the offshore programme as discussed in chapter four. This may suggest that students’ English language capability has a direct link to students’ academic satisfaction and in-direct link to the reputation of the awarding university.

The research findings also suggest that there is room for improvement with the current course material selection, which does not apply much of local knowledge and cultural needs of the host country. The course offered to offshore in Vietnam had been designed by the New Zealand lecturers to fit in the New Zealand curriculum. As part of the offshore programme agreement between the host and the awarding universities, there was very little or no modification to the course design and delivery for use offshore, this is to ensure that the students offshore receive the
same quality education as the students onshore. However, students expect the offshore course to be more relevant to the local environment, the selection of course material to include examples that reflect to local knowledge, and provide links to the local business and information and communication technology industry. This will require the lecturers and course co-ordinators to review the course materials used offshore. One of the challenges facing New Zealand lecturers relates to their lack of local knowledge and working experience in the context where the students resident. This may require a new approach one that focuses on building networks with local industries. It also requires co-ordination between the host institution and the teaching team of New Zealand.

In relation to helping students overcome online learning difficulties, it may be a good strategy and practice to have more teaching assistants offshore. Given that the current offshore programme combines online and face-to-face teaching for this very reason, teaching assistants also play a more important part in localising courses designed and delivered by New Zealand university, and assist offshore students to participate more in the online learning environment. The teaching assistants have completed the offshore course; their experience can be shared with their students who they support. In addition, the teaching assistants, who are seen as cultural insiders, can assist the cultural outsiders – New Zealand lecturers to understand the teaching and learning environment, local business practice and education policies offshore. This will require effort and commitment to one of the fundamental underlying principles of internationalisation to integrate intercultural dimension into the delivery of offshore education in Vietnam.

This research suggests that there were significant differences in the teaching and learning approaches between the university in New Zealand and the university in Vietnam. The findings of this study appear to be contrary to the commonly held perception that in an examination –
driven setting such as Vietnam, students’ motivation in learning is mainly rooted in the expectation of passing exams. Thus, the view that learning motivation in the offshore classes is largely dependent on teachers-directed learning. The emphasis on critical thinking, problem solving and independent learning by New Zealand lecturers impacted on the students’ learning.

Given that all students participated in this study faced challenges in distance learning, which mainly related to online communication methods. Lecturers in the study also stated that it requires more effort in teaching due to the nature of the offshore delivery. There may need to be a greater emphasis on online teaching and learning technologies development to better support offshore teaching and learning. The amount of effort described by both academic staff and students raises a question how to encourage students to participate in online learning. BlackBoard is more than a means of merely transmitting course material or exchanging email between student and lecturer, Blackboard can be more communicative and participatory, and provide a range of spaces that encourage students to participate and share work and ideas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Potential Areas of Future Research

In future work, it would be appropriate to investigate whether the results of this study would apply in a more diverse environment that includes local, international and offshore students. Similarly, the teaching approaches / methodologies, delivery methods, assessment structures and course materials for the offshore programme influence the outcomes. A repetition of the experiment with a larger sample would enhance the validity of the findings.
This study did not involve all lecturers in the offshore teaching team; further research could be done with a wider pool of lecturers, such as including female lecturers and non-European -New Zealand lecturers. It would be interesting to explore their views on offshore teaching and learning issues and challenges, and what cultural experiences they have encountered. It would provide a broader view of the offshore teaching and learning experience in Vietnam. The study only dealt with the experiences of learners and lecturers in a programme. The perspective of the Heads of School, teaching assistants and academic administration staff in the two universities need to be included in future research.

The ethnicity of the lecturer participants in this study were two New Zealand Europeans and one European, which does not present a full picture of the face of academics, whereas there is an ethnic mix in the offshore teaching team, such as Chinese, Singaporean and Indian lecturers. Their teaching experiences with Vietnamese students could be different to the participants, which can be investigated further in future research.

It would also be appropriate to look at the students’ academic performance on papers designed and delivered by New Zealand lecturers, compared with their counterparts in New Zealand, to see if there is any difference in terms of academic achievement.

Considering that a key influence for taking an internationally recognised qualification is that it would enhance career opportunities, further research could be conducted to see if the programme has provided a link to the information communication technologies industry and relevant job market in Vietnam, to further explore whether students’ expectations were met.
Practice
The findings have highlighted some areas where practice might be improved. In order to attract students, offshore courses need to be more relevant to the local context of the student, the success of offshore programmes relies on being able to develop curriculum that is relevant to learners. To achieve this, course materials that reflect the social and cultural needs of the host country need to be taken into consideration.

One key aspect of student selection is ensuring that students have adequate English competency to do well in their programme, one suggestion is that prior to admission of the offshore programme, students should take the form of an IELTS (International English Language Test System) or agreed English for academic purposes preparation programme. It is important to set a level of English prior to admitting students to the programme, and as well as on going English language support.

It is important to provide more online learning resources, such as access books, journals newspapers online via the awarding / host universities library to support students' learning offshore. Particularly, the university should provide extra assistance in helping students improve their academic literacy skills. This could potentially lower the number of plagiarism cases. Ensuring that the programme they deliver across borders and in their home country are of comparable quality and that they also take into account the cultural and linguistic sensitivities of the hosting country.

The New Zealand university should provide more learning resources to support distance learning, such as learning development courses called
KEYS for success academic short course, which is free for students who enrolled with the New Zealand university. Lecturers suggested that the resources such as KEYS programme should be made available to students in Vietnam in conjunction with the degree programme. KEYS was designed by the New Zealand university with the aim of helping students thrive and succeed in the academic environment. The programme offers a range of papers that assist students to gain the skills and information needed to get the most out of their time in the university environment, and beyond. Each KEYS paper stands alone and requires 8 – 10 hours of class contact time. There are a number of papers that would be suitable for students in Vietnam; these papers include Academic English, Critical Thinking, Oral Presentation and Academic Writing. It is hoped that the KEYS programme could be one of the strategies used to introduce and improve students’ academic literacy in Vietnam.

On the same note, the problem of plagiarism is one area that must be addressed at the very beginning of the course, lecturers must clearly state the rules and academic regulations of New Zealand university regarding plagiarism and cheating.

Universities need to develop a range of strategies to build and maintain similar standards offshore to those, which are espoused within the Western university’s domestic curriculum. As Debowski (2006) suggested, structuring a range of learning opportunities for each teaching topic could be one of the strategies used. Lecturers should have the flexibility and capability to adapt to the needs of learners offshore, whilst maintaining the standards of Western universities. Furthermore, a deeper understanding of the local environment would assist lecturers during their early offshore visits. Gribble and Ziguras (2010) suggested that staff involved in offshore programmes needed to be able to bridge cultural differences in order to provide students with what they want from a
foreign degree, and to do so in a way that was not disrespectful to the values of the host culture. While Vietnamese students admitted that it was very challenging completing the course in the Western education context, they did not think any changes were required in terms of teaching approach. They believed the content should reflect both local and overseas practice and knowledge, and more face-to-face delivery would be beneficial.

Many Vietnamese students undertaking offshore undergraduate degrees are not familiar with Western ideas, culture and business practices. Enhancing quality delivery to offshore programmes this study suggests the need to engage appropriately with the needs of students in an offshore context. Lecturers ought to use examples that are culturally and geographically appropriate It would be helpful for lecturers to investigate the local economic and communication information technology industry. It is important to note that the economic, communication, and information technology environment in Vietnam is different to that found in New Zealand or other Western countries.

Staff involved in offshore programmes need to be able to bridge the cultural differences and apply local knowledge in order to provide students with what they want from a foreign degree. To successfully run a programme offshore, universities should seek to identify the academic and learning needs of the students that they wish to serve, therefore, learners’ cultural needs, personal characteristics and attitudes of the learners are not neglected. Offshore education should encourage the awareness and knowledge of the culture and customs of both the awarding institutions and hosting country among the student and staff.

Culture is a complex phenomenon. This study explored one of the elements of culture the experiences of learners from Vietnam and
lecturers from New Zealand. Delivering programmes offshore is a growing market for universities in New Zealand, as it appears to be the trend in the global education arena. However, while establishing relationships between universities in New Zealand and overseas education providers, it is appropriate to attempt to understand the differences in culture between the two countries and students' learning needs and expectations in an offshore programme. The cultural differences between Vietnam and New Zealand are substantial; therefore, cultural awareness and intercultural competence are vital skills for educators who are involved in the area of course planning and managing, as well as paper development and delivery of degree-level programmes offshore.

Enhancing learning and teaching experiences in an offshore programme requires extensive planning and extra effort for lecturers. It is crucial to ensure that the students’ expectations of learning and academic needs are addressed in an offshore programme. A course delivered offshore needs to meet the academic standards of both the host country and the home county of the education provider, and more rigorous monitoring strategies must be put in place.

To enhance students’ learning experiences in offshore programmes, case studies which are relevant to the local context of Vietnam would be appreciated. Therefore, the researcher of this study suggests that the course apply local knowledge and build it into the course materials as that would be very useful.

Continue bringing local teaching assistants into the teaching team as academic subsidiary to the New Zealand lecturers; recognise the value they bring to the content and materials of the curriculum as well as to its delivery.
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY
One of the limitations of the study was its scope. The findings come from seven students at one university in Vietnam and three lecturers at one university in New Zealand. To counter the limitations of the small data size, the study is an in-depth qualitative study. The aim of the study is to explore the experiences of lecturers and learners in an offshore programme in Vietnam; it is not aimed to generalise the findings. The findings provide insight into the experiences of a small group of learners and lecturers, each of whom brings with them their own experiences and opinions. Through the use of an interpretivist case study, the study does not necessarily identify gaps that may require attention, but looks at overall benefits and challenges that might be encountered by learners and lecturers.

The study provides some useful indicative results that may be the basis for future research. Given the increased number of similar offshore programmes, such studies will need to investigate key issues facing both lecturers and students. The experiences of other students and lecturers’ may differ from those of this study. It was not the aim of the study to prescribe a “better practice” for educators or learners. The research aim of this study was to deepen the understanding of learning experiences of Vietnamese students in the final year of a joint Computing Information Sciences degree between the New Zealand university and the university in Vietnam, and the challenges encountered by New Zealand lecturers when teaching offshore.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS
The offshore computing degree programme in Vietnam is an established and integral part of the internationalization activity of both universities in New Zealand and Vietnam. The benefit of such activity is potentially far
greater than just financial gain; it is the opportunity for lecturers, students and support staff to be involved in significant intercultural exchange, and to integrate what they learn into their teaching practice.

In the last decade, we have witnessed a shift from an aid to a trade approach of education services as discussed in Chapter two. The international education sector has grown to include both international student mobility as well as the mobility of educational programmes and institutions across borders globally and locally. Degree programmes represent more than half of the offshore programmes internationally (see figure 2.1.), with the majority of these programmes designed by Western universities, and delivered to Asian countries where English is not their first language, education system, teaching and learning approaches and culture have significant difference to the West. In recent years, Vietnam has followed this trend and set up a number of offshore programmes.

As discussed in Chapter two, most published research is conducted by researchers from U.K, U.S.A and Australia, while issues and challenges are related to Asian students from China, Singapore, Malaysia and Korea. There has been limited research that has addressed the issues and challenges by New Zealand universities in Vietnam.

The study aims to partially fill the gap and contribute to this body of knowledge. This study adds to the body of literature on offshore education between New Zealand and Vietnam universities by focusing on New Zealand lecturers and students in Vietnam. Teaching and learning experiences are investigated in an intercultural context, strategies adopted to overcome challenges and issues. The issues raised by the lecturers and students results are fairly consistent. The results do not conform to issues and challenges identified in the international offshore education arena, and strategies lecturers and
students are attributed to specific conditions of education with in this intercultural context. As previously discussed, traditional international education research has not been focused on Vietnam and New Zealand offshore programmes, thus, for this, the study needs to be recognized that the issues / challenges and strategies adapted have their own unique characteristics. These findings provide initial steps in improving and understanding of the offshore education.

The study ought to help in future course design, paper development and delivery for the offshore programme. The challenge for academic programme development and management is to ensure that the academic standard and the quality of the programmes offered offshore is the same as the host university’s. This requires extra effort from lecturers who are involved in offshore teaching. It also requires the university to utilize information communication technologies, provide students with extra teaching assistance and relevant online learning resources to support distance learning. The aim of an offshore programme should be to improve access to learning and to internationalise education. The offshore programme has the capacity to broaden access while at the same time enriching students’ experience through relationships that transcend boundaries between New Zealand and Vietnam. To achieve meaningful offshore education, the programme requires lecturers who are able to make connections between international trends and their students’ own life experiences.

Offshore programmes are an important area of international activity in most institutions in New Zealand, and it has become an important part of the New Zealand university’s profile. The New Zealand Education Strategic Plan 2010 -2015 (TES, 2010) indicates that tertiary education participation has expanded all over the world. At the same time, tertiary education has become more international, with greater global networking, and more mobile staff and students. Institutions should
ensure that their international activities are managed to achieve high-quality learning for international including offshore students. This study has been one small attempt to identify some of the key issues facing lecturers and students and to consider some of the strategies adopted by participants to address learning and teaching issues in an offshore computing programme. Offshore programmes provide a unique opportunity for lecturers of the New Zealand university and students in Vietnam to become intercultural learners, which in turn may enhance their teaching and learning experiences. Quality is fundamental to maintaining and enhancing the reputation of New Zealand qualifications and New Zealand education providers overseas, and it is vital to the continued success of any offshore education initiatives, and the development of offshore programme are educationally and culturally sustainable.

If the Vietnam university desires to develop and support internationally respected communication and information technology and education programmes, it will require the assistance of the New Zealand university in a number of areas. Lecturers who had the opportunity to teach on the offshore programme in Vietnam will find it challenging, but rewarding. However, better understanding of the various cultural factors that come into play in such an endeavour will make the experience all the more worthwhile for all parties involved. Pursuing higher education in an offshore programme, allows students to expand their knowledge of other cultures and languages, and to better equip themselves in an increasingly globalised labour market. Beyond its social and educational effects, an offshore programme has a considerable economic impact on the host university and its country.
REFERENCES


Hitchcock, L. (2009). Intercultural competence in practice: Reflections on
establishing cross-cultural collaborative education programmes. *Inroad*, 1(3) 29-34.


Le, N. V. (2002). *Confucianism in Vietnam.* Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam:
Vietnam National University and Ho Chi Minh City Publishing house.


McDonald, K. (2000). Authorisation of knowledge in the
interview process. *Centre for the study of curriculum and instruction University of British Columbia publications Centre*, 6(1), online issue.

Retrieved on August 2012 from

http://www.ccfi.educ.ubc.ca/publication/insights/archives/v06n01/mcdonald.html


Retrieved on November 2012, from

http://www.worldedreform.com/intercon2/programhb.htm

OECD (2012). Education at a glance 2012, Retrieved on


**APPENDIX**

Appendix A – Participation Information Sheet - Student

---

**INFORMATIONSHEET**

– Students in Vietnam

Title of Thesis: Experiences of learners and lecturers in an offshore programme in Vietnam

My name is Ann Wu I am currently enrolled in the Master of Education degree in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology and invite you to participate in my research to meet the requirements of research for a thesis course which forms a substantial part of the degree.

The aim of the project is to explore the learning experiences of Vietnamese students in the final year of joint Computing Information Sciences degree between AUT University and Ho Chi Minh University of Sciences in Vietnam, and the challenges encountered by New Zealand lecturers when teaching offshore.

I request your participation in the following way:

- I will be collecting data using Students Participants online journals via AUT Online;

You have the right to decline to take part. If you agree to participate to record your learning experiences via online journal over a period of 3 weeks, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You can withdrawal a week after collection of data. Information that may identify you will be kept confidential. You are able to ask any questions about the study at any time during participation. All data collected via AUT Online will only be used for this research and will be removed at the end of the 3 week period.

If you consent to participate I hope that you will find this participation of interest. If you have any queries about the project, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology, Associate Professor Dr Jenny Collins via email: jcollins@unitec.ac.nz

Yours sincerely

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (#1021)
This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from (March 2012) to (March 2013). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix B – Participation Consent Sheet – Student

CONSENT FORM – Students in Vietnam

DATE

TO: [participant’s name]

FROM:

RE: Master of Education

THESIS TITLE: Experiences of learners and lecturers in an offshore programme in Vietnam

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research and I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that I may ask further questions about the research at any time.

I understand that

• My name will not be identified in any public reports
• the data will only be used for the purposes outlined to me
• the data will be removed from AUT online after the three week period
• I may withdraw myself or any information that has been provided for this project a week after collection of date.

I agree to take part in this project.

Signed: ______________________________________

Name: ______________________________________

Date: ______________________________________

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (#1021)

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from (March 2012) to (March 2013). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical
conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix C – Participation Information Sheet – Lecturer

Title of Thesis: Experiences of learners and lecturers in an offshore programme in Vietnam

My name is Ann Wu; I am currently enrolled in the Master of Education degree in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology and I would like to invite you to participate in my research to meet the requirements of research for a thesis course which forms a substantial part of the degree.”

The aim of my project is to explore the learning experiences of Vietnamese students in the final year of joint Computing Information Sciences degree between [AUT University] and [Ho Chi Minh University of Sciences] in Vietnam, and the challenges encountered by New Zealand lecturers when teaching offshore.

I request your participation in the following way:

I will be collecting data using an interview that will take about 30 - 40 minutes to complete. I would appreciate being able to interview you at a time and a venue that is acceptable for you.

You have the right to decline to take part. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You can withdrawal a week after interview. You can refuse to answer any particular question at any time. You will be given an opportunity to check the transcripts and make corrections. Information that may identify you will be kept completely confidential. You are able to ask any questions about the study at any time during participation.

If you consent to participate I hope that you will find this participation of interest. If you have any queries about the project, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology, Associate professor Dr Jenny Collins email: jcollins@unitec.ac.nz

Yours sincerely

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (#1021)

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from (March 2012) to (March 2013). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix D – Participation Consent Sheet – Lecturer

DATE

TO: [participant’s name]

FROM:

RE: Master of Education

THESIS TITLE: Experiences of learners and lecturers in an offshore programme in Vietnam

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research and I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that I may ask further questions about the research at any time.

I understand that

• My name will not be identified in any public reports

• the interview will be audiotape and I will be provided with a transcript for checking before data analysis is started

• the data will only be used for the purposes outlined to me

• I may withdraw myself or any information that has been provided for this project a week after the interview.

I agree to take part in this project.

Signed: ________________________________

Name: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (#1021)

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from (March 2012) to (March 2013). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix E – Guides for student to record online Journals

Thesis Title: Experiences of learners and lecturers in an offshore programme in Vietnam

Guides for student to record online journals

General Background:

- What is your previous experience of study (secondary, tertiary)?
- Have you studied abroad before?
- What factors and influenced you to enrol in the joint degree between [University] and [University]?
- What were your expectations prior to enrolling in the programme.
- Describe your previous experiences or expectations with Western or non-Vietnamese lecturers. Give examples.

Learning experience with [University] lecturers:

- What has been your experience with [University] lecturers
- Are there any differences in teaching approach between Vietnamese and [University] lecturers Please provide example(s)
- Were there any similarities?
- Identify some learning challenges you faces in classes taught by [University] lecturers. Please provide example(s). What is your preferred learning and teaching style (consider aspects such as course evaluation methods: class interaction, oral presentation, group assignment, individual assignment and exams).

Inter-cultural communication challenges and adoptions:

- What was your experience of communicating with your [University] lecturers? Please provide example(s).
- Discuss the main cultural challenges/ issues that you faced during your study
- How did you attempt to deal with those challenges?
- Reflections and suggestions for future improvements:
- Looking back on the joint degree experience, what is your overall evaluation?
- How would you like to see these courses taught in the future?
- Do you have any suggestions to your [University] lecturers that would help to improve your learning or that of future students? If so give details.
- What are your future plans once completing the degree?
I would appreciate it if you could please record those experiences online journal on
online for three weeks between [date] – [date].

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (#1021)

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from (March 2012) to (March 2013). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 7248). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix F – Semi-structured Interview Questions – Lecturer

**Thesis Title:** Experiences of learners and lecturers in an offshore programme in Vietnam

**Interview questions with lecturers**

**General Background:**
- Tell me about your experience of teaching Asian international students (e.g. culture, characters, attitudes and learning styles etc.)
- What is your previous teaching experience with Vietnamese students?
- What were your assumptions and expectations about Vietnamese students in relation prior to teaching in Vietnam?

**Teaching experience with students in Vietnam:**
- What was your experience of teaching students in Vietnam like?
- Were there any differences from what you expected?
- Were there any similarities?
- Is the paper delivered in Vietnam the as same as in AUT?
- Do you use different delivery methods in Vietnam than here in AUT?
- What was your experience of Vietnamese students approaches to learning (e.g. class interaction, oral presentations, group assignment, individual assignments or exams)?
- Have you experienced different working relationships with students in Vietnam compared with international students here at AUT?

**Inter-cultural communication challenges and adoptions:**
- What were the main communication challenges with your students in Vietnam?
- What was the cultural experience like? What were the main cultural challenge/ issues that you faced during your time teaching in the joint programme.
- How did you respond? E.g. identify strategies that you used to deal with those challenges/ issues?

**Future improvements:**
- What is your overall reflection of the experience of teaching in Vietnam?
- How would you like to see these courses taught in the future?
- Do you have any suggestions / advice that you could provide to students in Vietnam that may enhance their learning skills experience and their academic achievement?
- Do you have a plan to continue your involvement in this programme/joint courses?
Appendix G – Confidentiality Agreement – Transcription Services

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT – TRANSCRIPTION SERVICES

TO: Ethics Committee, Unitec

FROM: 

DATE: 9/6/12

RE: transcription of interview data

I, , agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from lecturers of AUT University related to the research of Experiences of learners and teachers in an offshore programme in Vietnam. Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents;

2. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerised files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by my supervisor Associate professor Jenny Collins;

3. To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;

4. To return all audiotapes and research related documents to Ann Wu in a complete and timely manner;

5. To delete all electronic files containing research related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if we disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which we will have access.

Transcriber’s name (printed)

Signature ________________________________

Date 9/6/12

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER:
This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from March 2012 to March 2013. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 61162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix H – Support Letter from the University in New Zealand

Dear Jie Wu,

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project and I give permission for research to be conducted in my organization. I understand that the name of my organisation will not be used in any public reports and that data will be collected from staff in AUT University.

Director/programme leader
Collaborative programme
Appendix I – Support Letter from the University in Vietnam

20 March, 2012

RE: Master of Education

THESIS TITLE: Experiences of learners and teachers in an offshore programme in Vietnam

Dear Ann Wu,

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project and I give permission for research to be conducted in my organization. I understand that the name of my organization will not be used in any public report and that data will be collected from students in the Ho Chi Minh University of Science, Vietnam.

Signature

Name of signatory
Appendix J – Ethical Approval

Ann Wu
36 White Heren Dr
Red Hill
Auckland
15.4.12

Dear Ann,

Year file number for this application: 2012-0223
Title: Experiences of learners and teachers in an offsite programme in Vietnam

Your application for ethics approval has been reviewed by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC) and has been approved for the following period:

Start date: 3.4.12
End date: 3.4.13

Please note that:

1. The above dates must be referred to on the information and consent forms given to all participants.
2. You must inform UREC, in advance, of any ethically relevant deviation in the project. This may require additional approval.

You may now commence your research according to the protocols approved by UREC. We wish you every success with your project.

Yours sincerely,

Deputy Chair, UREC