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CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR LEARNING AND SOCIAL EXPERIENCES IN NEW ZEALAND

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Management in Communication Management at
Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand**

Yi Yang

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ABSTRACT

Chinese students' participation in New Zealand educational institutions plays a critical role in the New Zealand export education industry. The significant decline in the numbers of Chinese students in New Zealand since 2003 has attracted considerable attention from New Zealand governments, educational providers and researchers. This study was conducted from July to September 2007. It adopted both qualitative and quantitative approaches, involving 86 Chinese students in a student survey, 20 in individual interviews, and 21 of their parents in a parent survey.

The study found that Chinese tertiary students perceived their learning and social experiences in New Zealand both positively and negatively, and their perceptions were affected by multiple factors. They generally gave positive evaluations to New Zealand tertiary education which encouraged them to be independent and critical thinkers, and developed their analytical and problem solving skills. They also gave positive ratings to academic teaching competence, university programmes and course structures, but low ratings to their lecturers' understanding their academic needs, availability to help them outside class times, and sense of responsibility for them. Significant minority of Chinese students were not happy with the quality of services provided by their tertiary institutions. Chinese students' perceptions of their learning experiences in New Zealand were also related to their difficulties in social and cultural adaptation, especially difficulties accessing employment to help them gain local work experiences. Prejudices and discrimination inside and outside their educational institutions contributed to the negative perceptions of Chinese students in their learning and social activities. Moreover, parental expectations and concerns were an important contributing factor to Chinese students' learning expectations and future plans.

This study recommended that staff at New Zealand tertiary institutions develop their cultural awareness and sensitivity in order to understand Chinese students' needs, adopt better approaches to teaching, management and servicing, and provide adequate support and pastoral care to them. Also, it recommended that Chinese students need to prepare themselves better for reality when they are learning in the New Zealand context. Furthermore, this study suggested that as parents are an important source of social support for Chinese international students, the better they understand their children's situations, the more likely it is that Chinese students will have better learning experiences in New Zealand.

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