

## *Original Paper*

# A Cross-Culture Study of the Opportunities and Challenges of International Students Attending Schools of Business at Western Universities and Higher Education Colleges: “Now, I Have Sufficient Self-Confidence to Seek Advice, and Act on It”

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## ***Abstract***

*International students attending schools of business at Western universities encounter various interrelated academic, language, cultural and socio-emotional challenges that impact their educational performance and success in their respective study programs, thus, shape their future professional prospects. The purpose of this paper is three-fold. First, develop a better understanding of the cultural and socio-emotional experiences of international Middle Eastern students attending American, British, and Australian universities in 2018, 2019, and early 2020. Secondly, find ways in which American, British, and Australian higher education providers can enhance their efforts in meeting the cultural and social-emotional needs of their international Middle Eastern students. Thirdly, discuss the academic and language experiences of international Middle Eastern students attending schools of business at Western universities in the above mentioned three countries. To this end, case studies have been designed for this purpose, where data is collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews. Accordingly, this study is guided by a series of research questions, as opposed to hypothesis testing. The participants involved in this study are all full-time international Middle Eastern students (n=90), undertaking their programs of study at both the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels at higher education institutions/providers in the three major world leaders in international education.*

**Keywords**

*International students, international education, curriculum design, curriculum development, culture, cultural shock, student coping, student adjustment*

**1. Introduction**

The purpose of this interdisciplinary study is to identify and assess the opportunities and challenges facing Middle Eastern international students attending undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral study programs within business schools at tertiary educational institutions in the three top world leading countries in international education, namely, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. In specific, the current study aims at exploring the following three issues. First, develop a better understanding of the cultural and social-emotional experiences of international Middle Eastern students attending American, British, and Australian universities and other higher education institutions in 2018, 2019, and early 2020. Secondly, find ways in which American, British, and Australian higher education providers can enhance their efforts in meeting the cultural and social-emotional needs of their international Middle Eastern students. Thirdly, discuss the academic and language experiences of international Middle Eastern students attending higher educational institutions in the above mentioned three Western countries.

To this end, this study is guided by a series of research questions, as opposed to hypothesis testing. Case studies have been designed for this purpose, where data is collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews. The respondents in this study are all full-time Middle Eastern students (n=90), undertaking their respective programs of study at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels at higher education institutions/providers in the above mentioned three major world leading countries in international education, training, and research. Some of these students have already finished their respective programs of study, as such, have graduated, while others are still pursuing their respective study programs.

The main purpose of undertaking the students' case studies is to analyze their individual and personal experiences, which in turn shape their respective educational transition pathways/journeys. A major dimension of the students' case studies relates to the analysis of their individual and personal experiences, which shape their respective educational journeys. To better understand students' challenges, their individual and personal experiences are then sketched through a four-state progressive cycle encompassing the following phases of initial algorithm/jumbled phase, experimental phase, transitional phase, and, finally, ending in stability and routinisation. As such, to better understand students' opportunities and challenges, their individual and personal experiences are stretched through a four-state progressive cycle encompassing the following phases:

1. Algorithm/jumbled phase.
2. Experimental phase.
3. Transitional phase; and,

#### 4. Stability and routinization phase.

As such, each student's transitional pathway, encompassing his or her personal journey, is outlined through a four-phase cycle (Hellsten, 2007). This begins with their initial algorithmic/jumbled state, initially commencing with the feelings of excitement and high expectations but ending in a crisis state. The student then moves into an experiential phase where continued cultural shock and possibly denial prevails; then gets into a transitional phase where the student will eventually undertake partial adaptations; to finally end with a new algorithmic state characterised by routinization, relative stability, settlement, and acceptance of the new prevailing situation.

Furthermore, to be fair to both the students and the respective tertiary educational institutions, the current study considers the impact of the students' geographical, cultural, and social-emotional aspects on influencing and determining their individual experiences. This includes the level of their self-confidence, ability to cope with the encountered challenges, as well as their degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their overseas study experiences.

On the international scene, in the past, the United States represented, and continues to the present time to represent, the largest country worldwide for the provision of international education, followed by the United Kingdom, while Australia is the third country for education export (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2009). Prior to the Corona-2019 pandemic, international education was a commodity and a lucrative enterprise (Lin, 2012), and it has been growing in all of the above three mentioned countries to become a main service industry (Australian Council for Private Education and Training, 2009).

In terms of Australia, for example, Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck divulged that the international education sector contributes \$1 billion more to the Australian economy than what had been estimated (Ministers for the Department of Education and Training, 2016). In addition, as Universities Australia revealed, education export earnings were at a record of \$21.8 billion in 2016 (Universities Australia, 2017). Australia has an excellent reputation for high quality university education. In addition, it has a lower Australian dollar. Furthermore, Australia is of a close proximity to Asia, as such Chinese and other Asian students found it easier to commute to Australia, as opposed to the United States and United Kingdom.

The purpose of the current exploratory study is to develop a better understanding of how American, British, and Australian universities, along with other higher international education providers, can augment their efforts in meeting the cultural and social needs of their international Middle Eastern students, once the outbreak and the current lockdowns due to the Covid-2019 pandemic is well controlled, and national and international borders are opened up. To this end, the current study explores the actual experiences of a group of international Middle Eastern students who were living and studying in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, through visiting their first-hand journeys about their respective experiences, and the consequential impact on their individual lives, personalities, and identities. To this end, international Middle Eastern students, studying for their diploma,

undergraduate, and postgraduate qualifications in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, undertook a series of semi-structured and in-depth interviews over a period of six months extending over 2019 and early 2020.

### *1.1 Socio-Cultural Learning Associated with Studying Abroad*

As Gomes (2014) indicated, an international student's social life impacts their satisfaction level with their overseas study experiences. Similar research studies further indicate that the intention behind overseas studies relates to the need of the international student to advance their future career prospects, learn a new language, and possibly enjoy few years of personal independence (Urban & Palmer, 2016). Nevertheless, upon intensive discussions with the international Middle Eastern student participants, it became clear that the decision of the great majority of them to study overseas was never intended as a total, or even partial, relinquishment of their respective cultures. As such, they had to match both cultures together, i.e., the Eastern culture prevailing in their home country and the Western culture of the host country they have moved to.

In addition, besides the language and learning difficulties, the majority of international students, including Middle Eastern students, face further cultural, social, lifestyle, and religious challenges. This includes, but is not limited to, gender issues, religious beliefs, and sexual values and patterns, that international students, in general, and Middle Eastern students, in particular, may find shocking and hard to overcome (Crockett & Hays, 2011; Newsome & Cooper, 2016).

### *1.2 Experiences of International Middle Eastern Students*

International students, in general, may need to go through critical modifications for endurance purposes. This is also true for Middle Eastern international students attending Western universities and colleges in the above mentioned three international education providing countries. This, for example, includes finding the right accommodation, adjusting to differences in social patterns, dealing with financial hardships, coping with stress, pressure, anxiety, depression, and, possibly, worthlessness and homesickness, in addition to the educational and language challenges (Urban & Palmer, 2016).

Even though certain difficulties may be due to the international student's own background and rearing, including their personal circumstances, the host educational institution may indeed assist with various students' issues and concerns. This could be accomplished via the formation of appropriate support structures that would smoothen and polish the student's social life (Urban & Palmer, 2016). As such, the host educational institution should develop a wide awareness and appreciation of their international Middle Eastern students' personal and professional goals and needs, as a means of better catering to them.

## **2. Method**

To comprehensively understand the details presented during the series of intensive interviews relating to the experiences of the participants as international Middle Eastern students attending schools of business at universities and colleges in the three above Western countries, a qualitative method had to

inevitably be selected. The sample ( $n=90$ ) consisted of ninety (90) international Middle Eastern students, equally recruited from the three different countries. That is, thirty (30) international Middle Eastern students from the United States, thirty (30) international Middle Eastern students from the United Kingdom, and thirty (30) international Middle Eastern students from Australia. The sample further comprised forty-five (45) international Middle Eastern male students, and forty-five (45) international Middle Eastern female students. The purpose of the main research question at hand is three-fold. First, develop a better understanding of the cultural and social-emotional experiences of international Middle Eastern students attending American, British, and Australian universities and other higher education institutions in 2018, 2019, and early 2020. Secondly, find ways in which American, British, and Australian higher education providers can enhance their efforts in meeting the cultural and social-emotional needs of their international Saudi students. Thirdly, discuss the academic and language experiences of international Middle Eastern students attending Business schools at Western universities and other higher education institutions in America, Britain, and Australia.

To this end, the current study posed the following three open-ended and exploratory research questions:

**Question 1:** How do international Middle Eastern students describe their adjustment to the overall Western culture?

**Question 2:** How do international Middle Eastern students describe their social interaction with people in America, England, and Australia, in general, and with their American, British, and Australian colleagues in the respective host country, in specific?

**Question 3:** How do international Middle Eastern students describe their adjustment to the use of English as the language of instruction?

The participants involved in this study were randomly selected from Western (American, British, and Australian) universities and higher education business programs providers to achieve the sample of ninety (90) international Middle Eastern students, whereby equal numbers ( $n=30$ ) of international Middle Eastern students were randomly selected from the three Western countries in focus, and equal numbers of male ( $n=45$ ) and female ( $n=45$ ) students were interviewed. All the international participant students are from the Middle East, and all of them are enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate business study programs in various American, British, and American tertiary institutions.

### *2.1 Data Collection and Analysis*

The qualitative case study methodology approach employed in the current study, with the use of semi-structured, in-depth, and informal interviews, provided the authors with the privilege of constructing a detailed investigation of the cultural and social experiences of the participating students. The relevant data was collected using the students' own accounts, interpretations, and stories of the personal experiences they have encountered while attending schools of business at Western universities and other higher education providers. The participating international Middle Eastern students were interviewed at least twice over a period of four (4) months in 2018 through early 2020.

## 2.2 Evolving Relational Patterns

Below are details of the processes through which the researchers engaged in as part of the current study to work out their relationship with the international Middle Eastern student participants over the four months interviewing period as a means of gaining their trust, and augment the honesty, reliability, and dependability of the collected data. As part of this process, the three authors dissected their own prejudices, including their personal conventions and tightened their control over the possible impact that may occur given their predeterminations, race, age, and gender (Alshenqeeti, 2014).

The first author, who was at some stage an international doctoral student in both the United States, and, later on, in Australia, conducted the interviews. This was stated to the participants at the start of the initial meeting. The authors agreed to the fact that knowing that the interviewer was at an earlier stage in life an international student herself would trigger participants to be honest about their experiences and accompanying feelings, especially that the interviews were informally held, in a stress-free and confident atmosphere, where the questions were open ended and semi-structured, thus, inspiring the international Middle Eastern student participants to talk freely, provide reliable and precise recounts about their circumstances, and truly share their stories and self-confidences (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The importance of appropriate presentation and speech cannot be stressed enough during the interviewing process, being foremost factors relating to the authenticity of the gathered data (Alshenqeeti, 2014).

## 3. Results and Discussion

The current research maps the study journeys of the international Middle Eastern student participants attending schools of business at American, British, and Australian universities and higher education institutions from the commencement of their respective educational journeys abroad, until the time this study was undertaken. The consequential findings have been categorized into three (3) main themes, as follows:

1. **Theme 1:** Cultural and family issues, negative propaganda concerns, adverse role of the distorted and controlled media.

Theme 1 involved issues related to international Middle Eastern students' cultural interpretations and on-going dealings with the American, British, and Australian culture.

2. **Theme 2:** Social interactions, prejudice and discrimination concerns, and relationships issues

Theme 2 involved issues related to international Middle Eastern students' social interactions, issues of prejudice and discrimination, and relationships developed with their American, British, and Australian people, and host country student colleagues.

3. **Theme 3:** Language Adjustment Issues

Theme 3 involved issues related to international Middle Eastern students' problems and adjustments made to the use of English as the language of instruction.

**Question 1: How do international Middle Eastern students label their adjustment to the overall**

## **Western (American, British, and Australian) culture?**

### **International Middle Eastern Students' Dealings with the American, British and Australian Culture**

Just like other international students, and as per the observations made by the great majority of the interviewed international Middle Eastern participants, the Middle Eastern students arrived at the above mentioned three Western countries with enormous excitement and high initial expectations, nevertheless, the honeymoon period experienced was brief and mere transient in both nature and duration. Shortly after, it was followed by a period that is best categorized as deep in bewilderment, distancing, hostility, loneliness, bitterness, antipathy, and foreignness; leading to a state of total and complete bewilderment and confusion, as the individual Middle Eastern student transited from a rather relatively ordered and well-organized algorithmic state in their respective home country surrounding environment, straight into a crisis situation experienced in the host country where they are living and studying (Helou, 2018).

As stated by the interviewed international Middle Eastern student participants, a shared concern is dealing with the financial drain relating to covering accommodation costs, tuition fees, other educational expenses, and daily living expenses, even though, unlike other international students, the respective home country Middle Eastern and gulf country governments provide acceptable financial support to all its highly achieving overseas students wishing to further their studies at Western universities and other higher education institutions. The financial burden concern pointed out in this study, once again confirms the outcome of various other relevant studies, including Newsome and Cooper (2016), Newsome and Helou (2018), and Newsome, Helou, and Crismon (2019).

In relation to cultural interpretations, international Middle Eastern student participants viewed Westerners as vague as per their revealed statements:

- They [Australian people] are really not as open-hearted as was portrayed to us [Middle Eastern international students] earlier (Hannan).
- They [British people] are cold. They [British people] look at me as though I come from a different planet (Areej).
- The Americans only understand one language [namely] money (Bilal).

Another international Middle Eastern student commented that the salutation of "Good Day" in Britain is simply meaningless:

- They [British people] look at me briefly and say, "good day", then quickly turn their heads around, as though they [British people] are afraid that I may respond back to them (Abdul).
- The [British people] look at us as though we are rich, simply because we come from rich oil exporting countries. They [British people] forget that we are only international students (Ahmed).
- The [British people] do not like to listen to us [international Middle Eastern students]. They [British people] think we are boring (Jamal).

Other issues that were brought up included family treatment, negative propaganda, total individuality,

and the adverse role of the distorted and controlled media:

- Americans only like to interact with one another. They [American people] are dry, like the British (Mohammed).
- [The] American media is untruthful. It [American media] is totally controlled. This [lack of American truthful media] is very strange in a country [United States of America] that claims democracy and freedom (Jamal).
- The American, British, and Australian media all portray the Middle Easterners as brutal barbarians, when we are not (Bilal).

Religious concerns kept recurring:

- I should not be looked down upon, or discriminated against, simply because I have different religious beliefs (Mohammed)?
- The American people think of Middle Eastern men as brutal because they have different religious values (Mahmoud).
- The Australian people do not like us. We [international Middle Eastern students] feel it every day (Elham).
- I wish I never went to England. I should have remained and studied in my home country (Fakher).

**Question 2: How do international Middle Eastern students define their social interaction with people in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, in general, and with their American, British, and Australian host country colleagues, in particular?**

#### **International Middle Eastern Students' Relationships with American, British, and Australian People, and Host Country Student Colleagues**

As per the observations and comments made by the international Middle Eastern student participants, they have found it difficult to develop and cultivate relationships with the Western people and with their Western student colleagues. They have described the Western people and the host local students they interacted with as cold, prejudiced, and individualistic. Research further indicated that international Middle Eastern students tend to socially mix with other international students, from various nationalities, as opposed to their American, British, and Australian colleagues.

Examples of the observations and short stories provided by the international Middle Eastern student participants include the following:

- I do not have any contact with any American. It is like I am not living in America (Omar).
- They [Australian people] stand for one another. We [international Middle Eastern students] are a foreign concept to them (Zain).
- They [British students] do not welcome us to work with them [British students] when group work projects and class work is required. Even though we [international Middle Eastern students] do not really understand the group work project requirements, we [international Middle Eastern students] accept each other and work with one another (Hayat).



- They [British people and students] do not like to hear us talk in our native languages (Rihab).
- They [British people and students] do not like us [international Middle Eastern students]. It was a warm day, and a small group of us [international Middle Eastern students] went to visit few British monuments. There was a stand close by, selling cold drinks. With every cold drink bottle, the sales lady was giving away a small plastic cup for free. When it was my turn, she gave me the drink bottle without the cup. When I asked for the cup, she said that I have to pay extra for it. They [British people and students] treat us [international Middle Eastern students] differently. I felt awfully bad, to the point that I did not want the drink bottle anymore. I went back to the booth and returned it. The sales lady took it but did not give me back my money. As she started to serve the next customer, while totally ignoring me, I walked away from her stand. I wanted to apply to an Australian university instead and transfer my studies to Australia, but I heard from other international Middle Eastern student colleagues in Australia that the discrimination against the international Middle Eastern students in Australia is worse. I wish I studied in my home country and never went to England (Abdul Rahman).

Furthermore, prejudice and discrimination continued to be a recurring theme in many of the international Middle Eastern student participants' observations, comments, remarks, and exemplary short stories:

- I lived in Australia for a year now, but I still do not know anything about Australia. It is just like I have never been there (Jawahar).
- They [Australian people and students] are jealous from us [international Middle Eastern students] because they [Australian people and students] think that we [international Middle Eastern students] have money and they [Australian people and students] don't (Anoud).
- The British people constantly pull down our self-esteem. We are international students. Instead of making us, their [British people and students] treatment of us, is breaking us (Nourah).
- We [Middle Eastern people] treat them with respect and kindness when they [British people] attend to our country for work purposes, but they fail to reciprocate our kindness and sense of respect when we attend their country [Britain] as international students (Reem).
- I want to go back to my country. It was a mistake going to Australia. They [Australian people] are discriminatory (Saleh).
- They [American people] smile only to our face (Hakim).
- They [American people] certainly want our money, but they [American people] do not want us [international Middle Eastern students] (Riad).

### **Question 3: How do international Middle Eastern students describe their adjustment to the use of English as the language of instruction?**

#### **International Middle Eastern Students' Adjustment to the Use of English as the Language of Instruction**

In agreement with Newsome and Cooper (2016), Newsome and Helou (2018), and Newsome, Helou and Crismon (2019), it was easier for international Middle Eastern students with higher IELTS scores

to settle in the United States, England, and Australia. Research in this domain is also in agreement with earlier studies in that language difficulties for international Middle Eastern students have proved to be a major barrier in their settlement, and in making friends in the above mentioned three Western countries. Similarly, in this study, difficulties in using the English language properly were often indicated as a major difficulty encountered in exchanges with Western host country students. Examples of such observations and comments made by the international Middle Eastern student participants include:

- The language barrier is a major problem to us [international Middle Eastern students] (Fahd).
- They [Australian students] laughed at me in class because I did not pronounce Descartes' name correctly. I did not think that it was funny. I felt embarrassed in front of my classmates and the lecturer. This is indeed a reflection on their [Australian] culture, not my lack of ability (Salman).
- They [British students] are monolingualistic, yet they make fun of students coming from other cultures that speak two or more languages (Rihab).
- I should have stayed at home, where my English language is considered to be good in comparison to others. We [international Middle Eastern students], like the rest of the international students from other countries, come here [to the United States] to improve our English language skills, and we [international Middle Eastern students] pay dearly for it, financially and otherwise. Instead, they [American students] laugh at us when we speak English [international Middle Eastern students] (Jawharah).

Throughout the first stage, it is evident from the international Middle Eastern student participants' disclosure that students have gone through a rough and uneasy phase, characterised by discomfort, nervousness, and anxiety about their present new situation, leading them to a crisis state. Out of the 90 international Middle Eastern participants engaged in the current study, twenty-one (21) students decided to drop out of their respective study programs and go back to their home countries. They found out that the adjustments, considered by them more as *needed sacrifices*, were intensive to the point that the students decided that it was not worthwhile the effort.

The rest of the sixty-nine (69) students reported going through an experimental phase, where disavowal characterized a main part of the faced experiences. These students have endured the hardships faced, continued to stay in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, and continued with their respective programs of study. Nineteen (19) students disclosed that, as part of their transitional phase, they had to make fractional modifications to be able to stay in the U.S., U.K., and Australia, and continue with their respective business study program offered within the same educational institution that they had originally enrolled in. This meant that they accepted to undergo what they considered to be feelings of discernment, solitude, parting, melancholy, and reminiscence; and, while living in the above three Western countries, limit their socio-emotional outlooks to a bare minimum, as a subsistence mechanism.

During the final phase of routinization and relative stability, it is evident that twenty-one (21) out of the remaining fifty (50) students were able to develop a sturdier sense of self-identity, which assisted them

in engaging with the difficult circumstances that they were facing more proficiently and effectively. They have learnt to trust themselves in terms of coping with their new circumstances, as such, attempt to acceptably resolve, or, at least, neutralise, arising concerns and problems. Examples of such observations and comments of these twenty-one (21) international Middle Eastern students included the following:

- Now, I have sufficient self-confidence to seek advice, and act on it (Fatimah).
- At this stage, I feel more confident to see things for what they truly are and try to resolve pertinent concerns myself (Nahed).
- I have learnt to depend on myself, as no one is going to help me otherwise (Layal).
- I now rely on myself to solve my own problems and try to go by day by day (Mariam).
- I have greatly lowered my expectations, as such, I am now more resilient to the difficulties I continue to encounter on a regular basis, at times, on a daily basis (Zainab).
- Living alone in a foreign country is not easy. One has to depend on themselves as I have learnt that no one is going to help me (Sahar).

The above mentioned twenty-one (21) international Middle Eastern students have reported making extreme sacrifices and extensive adjustments resulting in enhancing their understanding of their self-identity to be more independent and survive what the students have considered to be false, discriminatory and ingenuine marketing and advertising challenges faced (Newsome & Cooper, 2016; Newsome & Helou, 2018; Newsome, Helou & Crismon, 2019), and, as a result gain valuable experiences in private amelioration as they settled with a new algorithmic state.

In conclusion, the aim of the current research study is to develop an understanding, and find ways in which American, British, and Australian universities and other higher education providers, operating in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, can enhance their efforts in meeting the cultural and social-emotional needs of their international Middle Eastern students. To this end, this research study mapped the academic journey and associated experiences of ninety (90) international Middle Eastern students, from an initial stage, characterized by enthusiasm, eagerness, and considerable hopes and prospects, followed by a precipitous, sharp, and swift crisis phase, getting into an experimental stage, followed by a transitional phase, and, finally, settling in a new and more realistic algorithmic state, branded by relative routinisation and stability.

As per the international Middle Eastern students' disclosures, it is clear that Middle Eastern students, like the rest of the international student body, are interested in having more socially reminiscent interactions and evocative involvements and experiences during their period of study in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia. This confirms with earlier research undertaken in this domain (Newsome & Cooper, 2016; Newsome & Helou, 2018; Newsome, Helou & Crismon, 2019).

In light of this finding, it would be of significant help if Western universities and higher educational institutions further back up, enable, and smooth out such student interactions, while concurrently orienting international Middle Eastern students for the development of academic skills and engaging

academic study. This, for example, includes organising more gatherings, sporting, and a variety of cultural events for them, as a means of further motivating students to undertake interesting social interactions and developing further cultural skills and experiences.

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#### **Note:**

**The American International Education Sector:** The United States is the largest provider of international higher education worldwide. The number of international students in the U.S. hit an all-time high in the 2018/2019 academic year, which was the fourth consecutive year where there were over one million international students enrolled in American universities and higher education providers. In accordance with the 2019 Open Doors Report on International Education Exchange, this represents an increase of 0.05 percent over last academic year. As per the data provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce, international students contributed \$44.7 billion to the U.S. economy in 2018, that is, an increase of 5.5 percent over 2017.

**The British International Educational Sector:** The United Kingdom is the second largest provider of international higher education worldwide. Figures from the Higher Education Statistics Agency show the number of international students starting courses at British universities and higher education institutions in 2017/2018 academic year were the highest, with a 5 percent increase over the previous year. Britain's education sector remains one of its most profitable, productive, and rewarding international assets, with new figures showing that it generates almost 20 billion pounds for the United Kingdom's economy in 2016.

**The Australian International Education Sector:** Prior to the commencement and spread of the Covid-2019 pandemic - and the closure of borders, within Australia, and overseas, i.e., between Australia and other countries, thus, totally isolating Australia from the rest of the world, by strictly prohibiting travel in and out of the country, as well as travel within Australian states - Australia too was a regional and world leader in international education, training and research, and a partner of choice of international collaboration. The number of international students accessing higher education in Australia continued to grow. Australia's international education sector was, and continues to be adaptive, innovative, and globally engaged. The real value of international education to Australia tethers with the consequential binding friendships and networks that materialise as a result of having international students sailing through their educational journeys in Australia. As a result, this enhances Australia's global reputation as a leader in learning and teaching, education and training, research and scholarship, and the provision of major professional educational services into future decades. Needless to say, the Australian education sector highly contributed, and continues to currently contribute, to the country's economy.