

Education Industry Revving Up

1. A recent newspaper investigation into the growing number of foreign fee-paying students raises some issues for timely reflection. To be blunt, we need to prepare ourselves for a sudden and major increase in population. This new population will not be permanent but it will continue to increase in numbers and make itself at home in New Zealand for the main purpose of intellectual advancement. It will, in effect, be a rotating population but one that produces an increase in the total population at any one time.
2. If you think, as even some Asian students do, that Auckland is already too Asian (one in eight Aucklanders is now Asian), be prepared for it becoming too European or too South American. Our booming education industry still catches some locals by surprise and, depending on your point of view about racial diversity, it may or may not be of comfort to know that it has only just begun.
3. The only limitations to its growth will be the decisions and behaviour of organizations serving these students from overseas who want to study here - whether it is English language or IT skills. And I do not mean just the education function itself: it includes health, transport, property and entertainment. The list increases into all aspects of society as more students arrive from the major continents.
4. My own company has grown 500 per cent in the past four years and our board is anticipating an even higher rate over the next five years. I see no reason we should consider industry growth expectations below this. Early next month we will open a new international language school in Queen St designed to give students internationally accredited English language skills so they can stay longer and study IT courses. Some will go on to our universities.
5. This one new school alone will inject an extra \$60 million-odd annually into Auckland's economy. What does this industry growth mean? It could mean a \$10 billion (contribution to gross domestic product) industry by the end of this decade, employing 100,000 New Zealanders directly and many more indirectly.
6. The conditions which have created this opportunity are many, but underlying them all are the standards which shape education in this

country. Some will argue that whimsical circumstances, such as a favourable exchange rate or our distance from the troubled areas of the world, have caused it all. But without the right internationally recognised education standards we would have no such booming industry.

7. Make no mistake, this is our trump card. As long as we are known for quality education we can develop what we have started regardless of almost any other change of circumstance. Undoubtedly, there are financial benefits for society. But we would be blind not to acknowledge and address the many other implications which the newspaper article began to identify.

8. The growth opportunity is so good that we must effectively evolve as an industry and fast, too. We must eliminate the clumsy, experimental mistake-ridden phase of youth. Fundamentally we must leap from childhood to maturity.

9. But how? Experiences in my company lead me to suggest three main areas to address - total service, performance regulation and long-term planning. By total service I mean accepting some responsibility for students inside and outside of campus. Within two years, my company expects at least 1000 overseas students to be studying at all our six campuses. We must take some responsibility for this size of customer base, as any normal company would.

10. This means we must attract other suppliers as dedicated partners with us - property, insurance, healthcare, transport, social support, the list goes on. Education New Zealand has a valuable role here.

11. This type of care begins in the students' home country, ensuring they have correct information about our country and how different it will be in many small and large ways. Our company, intent on achieving this, is introducing marketing programmes in three continents. Performance regulation will be vital in our leap to adulthood. We cannot leave it up to the Government; it will mean a private sector-Government partnership.

12. I am also not surprised to hear calls for the Government to introduce an industry levy - frankly, just another tax - to "protect" standards. We should keep in mind that foreign students are happy to come here because of our stable Government, virtually non-existent corruption, and education standards. For the Government to come to our support with an extra levy imposition reminds me of an old saying: When a sufficient number of

management layers are superimposed on top of each other, it can be assured that disaster is not left to chance.

13. Long-term planning usually begins with a vision agreed by the industry and I will support any immediate efforts in this area. We now have an industry that is arguably our country's third largest export earner. We need to know where we can take this industry, how it fits with society and its place in an increasingly systemic world where people move more freely and technology drives a global economy.

*Answer the following questions in **no more than three words**:*

- 11 Where should the type of care the writer discusses initially come from?
- 12 What will be very important in the education sector's rise to maturity?
- 13 What does the government want to bring in?
- 14 Give one reason why students are content to study in New Zealand?
- 15 What does the ongoing preparation usually start with?
- 16 How big an export industry is English language teaching?