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**Should I stay or should I go now?**  
**Views of international high school students on completing**  
**their tertiary education in New Zealand**

A thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

**Master of Education**

at

**The University of Waikato**

by

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**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

**2016**

## **Abstract**

The aim of this study was to investigate the motivating factors behind the decisions that international high school students make when deciding to come to New Zealand, and their decisions to continue onto tertiary studies in New Zealand or to return home. The rationale is that if these motivating factors are better understood, it might be possible to create an environment in New Zealand tertiary institutions that would encourage more students to come, stay and continue to study here. The investigation used a mixed method design, using both focus groups and an online survey that yielded a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. The findings from the focus groups formed the foundation of the questions for a wider survey of students in the Bay of Plenty and Waikato. The results were discussed using an established push-pull model of international student motivations (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

The results suggest that international students come to New Zealand because it has a good education system and there is a wide range of subjects available. In addition, New Zealand is perceived as a clean and beautiful country that can offer a safe environment for international students. Students come to the Bay of Plenty region for the lifestyle and are less likely to continue to tertiary studies in New Zealand than those students who studied in the Waikato region. Furthermore, according to how students explained their future study plans, it was not envisaged that the Bay of Plenty would retain any of the students surveyed, while the Waikato region was set to retain half of the students surveyed in the Waikato. The international students more likely to stay on are Asian—they perceive that the quality of education in New Zealand to be of a high standard and that New Zealand offers a good study environment for international students. These students' decisions are strongly influenced by their parents, education agents back home and international managers in New Zealand. European students make their own study destination decisions with the support of their parents. They have more confidence in their English ability in comparison to Asian students, but are more likely to return home where they have access to low cost, high quality education. The results also indicate that the vast majority of students made their future study plans *before* they came to New Zealand. The results furthermore confirm that students who have been in New Zealand for over a year do not see studying in English as a major barrier to

completing their studies, but in the case of those leaving, the main attraction is to study in a familiar culture and language context with the support of friends and family.

The study considers the complex mesh of push-pull factors and their effect on student decision-making. The results have potentially strong implications for attracting students who are undecided in relation to their future education destination. This is to say, these students may be able to be encouraged to stay if they were offered more access to career advice and if someone from the universities or polytechnics would come and explain the study options to them. The tertiary environment students would thrive in is likely to be one that offers highly regarded international qualifications, a supportive academic environment, financial support, and the opportunity to get out and enjoy New Zealand's natural environment and interact with New Zealand students.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks firstly to the University of Waikato and Bay of Plenty Polytechnic who encourage and support staff to continue on their quest for lifelong learning.

Thank you to Dr Alan Hampton for granting me a sabbatical in order to pursue my personal, professional and academic goals.

Thanks to the International Managers and support staff of the high schools around the Bay of Plenty and Waikato, without whom this research would not have been possible.

Thank you to the participants of the focus groups and online surveys who gave up their time to share their views.

A big thanks to Dr Mira Peter, my supervisor, for believing in me, and directing my enthusiasm in the right direction. The learning is in the doing.

And finally to my two favourite girls, Hana and Karmen, and the rest of my family for supporting me through this education journey.

# Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents .....	v
List of tables.....	ix
List of figures.....	x
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background of international education in New Zealand.....	1
1.2 Current international student landscape.....	2
1.3 The influencing factors behind this study .....	2
1.4 The future of international students in New Zealand.....	4
1.5 The focus of this study .....	5
Chapter 2: Literature review .....	6
2.1 Importance of international students to the New Zealand education sector...6	
2.2 Quality assurance and Pastoral care of international students.....	8
2.3 Where the international students in New Zealand come from.....	10
2.4 Student satisfaction.....	10
2.5 Maintaining high standards for international students in New Zealand.....	12
2.6 Leaving home and choosing a study destination – Push Pull Factors.....	13
2.7 Push factors – home country.....	14
2.7.1 Academic Motivations.....	14
2.7.2 Professional & Financial Motivations.....	15
2.7.3 Personal & Human Motivations.....	15
2.8 Pull Factors – Study Destination.....	16
2.8.1 Academic Motivations.....	16
2.8.2 Professional & Financial Motivations.....	17
2.8.3 Physical Environment.....	18
2.8.4 Personal & Human Motivations.....	19
2.9 Push Factors - Study destination.....	20
2.9.1 Academic Motivations.....	20
2.9.2 Professional & Financial Motivations.....	21

2.9.3 Personal & Human Motivations.....	22
2.10 Pull Factors – Home Country.....	23
2.10.1 Professional & Financial Motivations.....	24
2.10.2 Physical Environment.....	24
2.10.3 Personal Human motivations.....	24
2.11 Prior studies and gaps in the literature.....	25
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	28
3.1 Research question.....	28
3.2 Aim of Research.....	29
3.3 Research Design.....	30
3.3.1 Choosing a mixed methods approach.....	3.1
3.3.2 Order of methods.....	32
3.4 Method .....	34
3.4.1 Focus groups.....	34
3.4.1.1 Participants.....	34
3.4.1.2 Materials .....	35
3.4.1.3 Procedure.....	35
3.4.2 Online survey.....	36
3.4.2.1 Participants.....	36
3.4.2.2 Materials .....	37
3.4.2.3 Procedure.....	38
3.4.2.4 Sample Size.....	39
3.4.2.5 Data analysis.....	39
3.5 Ethical issues.....	40
3.5.1 Access to participants & informed consent.....	40
3.5.2 Anonymity/Confidentiality.....	40
3.5.3 Other ethical concerns relevant to the research.....	41
3.6 Limitations .....	41
Chapter 4: Focus group findings .....	43
4.1 Demographics of respondents.....	43
4.2 Push factors from their home country.....	43
4.2.1 Motivations to leave home and study overseas .....	43
4.2.2 Influencers.....	44

4.3 Pull factors for New Zealand.....	44
4.3.1 Motivations to stay and continue onto tertiary education in New Zealand.....	45
4.4 Push Factors from New Zealand .....	46
4.5 Pull factors to their home country .....	46
Chapter 5: Online survey findings .....	48
5.1 Introduction .....	48
5.2 Demographic of students .....	48
5.3 Reasons for coming to New Zealand initially .....	50
5.3.1 Academic motivations .....	51
5.3.2 Financial & professional motivations .....	52
5.3.4 Physical environment .....	53
5.3.5 Personal & human motivations .....	53
5.3.6 People influencing students' decisions to come to study in New Zealand.....	55
5.4 Future intentions .....	57
5.4.1 When future study decisions were made .....	58
5.4.2 Motivations for student decision making .....	59
5.4.3 Students planning to stay in New Zealand to study at University or Polytechnic .....	60
5.4.4 Main motivators to stay in New Zealand .....	62
5.4.5 Students planning to return home to study at University or Polytechnic..	62
5.4.6 Students who are unsure of their future pathway .....	64
5.4.7 Students planning to go to another country to study at University or Polytechnic .....	65
5.5 Perceptions of international students of tertiary education in New Zealand.....	67
5.6 Students' perceptions of studying at tertiary providers in their home countries .....	68
5.7 Factors that could attract students to stay to complete their tertiary education in New Zealand .....	69
5.8 Satisfaction of students with their study experience in New Zealand .....	70
5.8.1 Factors contributing to students' happiness / unhappiness .....	71
5.9Should I stay or should I go? .....	72
5.9.1 Motivations to stay .....	72

5.9.2 Motivations to go .....	73
Chapter 6: Discussion of findings.....	76
6.1 Introduction .....	76
6.2 What makes students want to leave home?.....	78
6.3 What draws students to and keeps students in New Zealand?.....	79
6.3.1 Motivators to come to New Zealand initially.....	79
6.3.2 Motivators to stay in New Zealand to continue tertiary studies.....	81
6.4 What makes students want to leave New Zealand?.....	84
6.5 What draws students back home?.....	86
Chapter 7: Conclusion & Recommendations .....	88
7.1 Summary of the findings .....	88
7.2 Key findings and recommendations .....	89
7.3 Contribution of this research and future research .....	92
References.....	95
Appendices.....	101
1: Table 1: Demographic of focus group respondents.....	101
2: Participant Information Sheet – Focus Groups .....	103
3: Consent form – Focus Groups.....	106
4: Participant Information – Surveys.....	110
5: Introductory letter / Permission form – Educational Institution – Focus Groups .....	112
6: Introductory letter / Permission form – Educational Institution – Online Surveys.....	115
7: Questions – Focus groups.....	118
8: Questions – Surveys.....	120

## List of Tables

<i>Table 1:</i> Demographic of focus group respondents (Appendix 1).....	101
<i>Table 2:</i> Country of origin: survey respondents.....	49
<i>Table 3:</i> Reasons for coming to New Zealand initially.....	54
<i>Table 4:</i> Percentage of influence each person(s) had on the students' decision to study in New Zealand.....	56
<i>Table 5:</i> Students plans after leaving their New Zealand high school.....	57
<i>Table 6:</i> Number of “undecided” students who selected each of the factors that would motivate them to stay in New Zealand to study.....	64
<i>Table 7:</i> Perceptions of international students on tertiary education in New Zealand.....	68
<i>Table 8:</i> Students' perceptions of studying at tertiary providers in their home counties.....	69
<i>Table 9:</i> Attractive factors for students to stay to complete their tertiary education in New Zealand.....	70
<i>Table 10:</i> Levels of student happiness by region.....	71

## List of Figures

<i>Figure 1: Students' plans after high school in New Zealand.....</i>	<i>59</i>
<i>Figure 2: Motivating factors in student future plan decision making.....</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>Figure 3: Study destinations of students planning to continue their studies in New Zealand.....</i>	<i>61</i>
<i>Figure 4: Student study destinations by region.....</i>	<i>61</i>
<i>Figure 5: Student motivations to begin their tertiary studies in New Zealand ...</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>Figure 6: Student motivations to return home after high school in New Zealand.....</i>	<i>63</i>
<i>Figure 7: What students are planning to study overseas.....</i>	<i>65</i>
<i>Figure 8: Motivations to study in another country after high school in New Zealand.....</i>	<i>66</i>
<i>Figure 9: Student motivations to stay in New Zealand.....</i>	<i>73</i>
<i>Figure 10: Motivations for students to leave New Zealand.....</i>	<i>74</i>

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Background of international education in New Zealand**

The demand for education, particularly higher education, has traditionally been driven by expectations of its ability to raise the economic and social status of the graduate (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002, p. 82). In New Zealand, in the early years of the Colombo Plan (Oakman, 2010) – a government subsidised education programme aimed at promoting international understanding through cultural exchange and bolstering the social ties and economies of developing nations through education – a small number of students from Asia started to arrive to study. Many of these students appreciated the social and educational opportunities they were given. “Their experiences in New Zealand were life changing and set them on a path to influence in their home countries” (Butcher, McGrath & Stock, 2008, p. 237). Along with this trend to experience foreign cultures came a desire to master the English language and to become globalised via western education in order to compete on the international stage. This tradition of culture- and education-based programmes remains strong to this day, and this along with a beautiful, friendly and safe study environment are arguably some of New Zealand’s greatest drawcards when attracting potential international students.

The handful of foreign fee-paying students, who started arriving into New Zealand through the Colombo Plan have developed into an indispensable pool of students and a major contributor to the cultural mix of schools throughout New Zealand. This change is described by Skyrme and White (2011) as “self-interested altruism” being “replaced by a business model of recruiting full-fee-paying students” (p. 188). Having large numbers of international students in a school not only benefits New Zealand students, by giving schools access to external funding to provide them with better facilities and opportunities, but the interaction of New Zealand students with foreign nationals also teaches New Zealand students international understanding and tolerance. This intercultural exchange was not previously available to New Zealand students who have never travelled abroad and some of the friendships that develop over time may even motivate New Zealand students to partake in an international exchange, consider a career in tourism, international education or business or to explore the world on completion of their studies.

## **1.2 Current international student landscape**

Since the early 2000's, many high schools in New Zealand have had buoyant international departments set up to meet both the education and pastoral care needs of international students. Tertiary institutions are also interested in having a strong presence of international students which serves as an alternative revenue stream to the funding provided by the government. These students also become part of a global network of alumni who, on completion of their studies, may seek to establish businesses in New Zealand or trade with New Zealand on returning to their home countries. The friendships formed with New Zealand students can also lead to future international social or business networks. Many educational institutions even tailor their programmes for international students, in areas identified as skill shortages both internationally and nationally, to ensure students are work-ready and can complete their studies as quickly and with as much support as possible. International students have become such an important part of the education landscape in New Zealand at both high school and tertiary levels that much money and effort is spent each year on international recruitment, ensuring that the number of students in the international departments remain large. Schools and tertiary institutions will often work together on a regional basis to formulate strategies to attract students firstly to New Zealand and subsequently to the individual region. Collective marketing groups such as Education Tauranga and Waikato Education International (WAI) are often guided in a nation-wide context by Education New Zealand, who are charged with implementing the national education strategy that looks at both the quality of student experience and recruitment, as well as fostering international relations, scholarships and partnerships.

## **1.3 The influencing factors behind this study**

Considering that there are hundreds of senior international students in our regional high schools, and that tertiary institutions in New Zealand are constantly seeking to maintain or increase international student numbers in their programmes, the question arises: What are the factors that motivate international students, already studying at high schools in New Zealand, to decide to remain in New Zealand and transition onto tertiary studies in New Zealand, or to return home? This study seeks to explore these motivating factors.

In the forever changing international student landscape, it is important to understand history and its value to New Zealand. There is no doubt that there are many cultural and social benefits in having a mix of international students as part of the student body in New Zealand. Although this study will explore social and personal aspects of a student's experience in New Zealand, it is important not to lose sight of why the education export industry exists. From the government's perspective and from the perspective of every international department at both high schools and tertiary institutions in New Zealand, the primary driver to attract more students is economic.

The rapidly growing export education industry was recognized by the Government as having the potential to be a major contributor to the New Zealand economy and in 1989 the New Zealand Government passed legislation to allow places in educational institutions to be sold to foreign students. The main student markets were primarily Asia, Japan, China and South Korea – with much effort spent on recruiting students from these areas during the 1990's. Tertiary institutions were the first to capitalise on this economic opportunity, followed closely by primary and secondary schools.

From 1999 to 2003, New Zealand's previously small international education sector, in terms of enrolments of foreign fee-paying students, experienced rapid growth. Foreign fee-paying student enrolment numbers rose by 318 percent over the five-year-period to nearly 119,000, with an estimated economic value of \$2.2 billion. Total numbers of international students peaked at a little over 120,000 in 2003-4 (Butcher et al., 2008). However, during this period there was a decline in student inflows from countries in the north of Asia, which affected enrolments across the public education sector and English language training providers. The 2004 Budget allocated \$40 million over the following four years in order to lift New Zealand's profile overseas as a viable study destination and to further strengthen education as an international export (Education Counts, 2014). This has contributed to sustained growth in foreign student numbers 2013 and 2014.

When international students come to New Zealand, they face financial, academic, and social challenges. Pastoral care and the support of students is often as important to a student's academic success as academic support. Maintaining a

quality social experience for international students is vital to the future of the export education industry. According to research, New Zealand has made efforts to provide a more supportive and inclusive environment for international students. Butcher et al. (2008) noted that there is a need to support building, facilitating and maintaining person-to-person relationships between Asian students and others in New Zealand, either formally through educational institutions or informally through groups such as church communities and sports-clubs. Simson and Tan (2009, p. 5) also argue that the educational institutions need to approach the education in a more holistic manner in order to optimise the education of international students.

#### **1.4 The future of international students in New Zealand**

If foreign students are vital to our economy and our educational institutions, what can tertiary institutions do to encourage them to stay? Alberts and Hazen (2005) note that the decision to return home or not is a complex one. The authors show that many students felt that the longer they stay in a host country, the more they are torn between choosing between their home and host country. For example, as one student mused “There are always two voices. One says to go back to China, and the other says to stay here. There are many factors that pull me back and forth. Sometimes I want to stay, and sometimes I want to go” (p. 139). Butcher et al. (2008) found that approximately four-fifths of Asian university students who study in New Zealand return to Asia. However, there is an increasing number of international students remaining in New Zealand after completing their tertiary studies according to the Graduate Longitudinal Study New Zealand: Baseline Survey (National Centre for Lifecourse Research, 2011).

According to the Chief Executive of Education New Zealand, the competition globally for international students is fierce. Thus, New Zealand education providers need to be flexible in their approach to programme delivery and focus on the quality of education experience (Education New Zealand, 2015). Given the time, cost and effort involved in recruiting international students, tertiary institutions may want to start looking for new potential students among those already in New Zealand high schools. In order to better develop such an approach to international students, it is important to hear their voice about their educational

experience to date. The International Student Barometer Survey, referred to as the ‘i-grad survey 2015’, (Education New Zealand, 2015) revealed that 33% of the respondents intend to return home, 26% plan to stay in New Zealand, 15% intend to go to another country and 26% don’t know what their future study plans are.

From this survey it is clear that one of the key opportunities for tertiary institutions to potentially attract more students exists in the context where students ‘don’t know’ what they plan to do after they finish their high school studies. Could staying on to complete the right qualification at a tertiary institution in New Zealand be an option for them? If so, then what can tertiary providers do to assist them in their decision-making?

### **1.5: The focus of this study**

The present study aims to explore the motivations that guide international high school students’ decisions to remain in New Zealand after finishing high school. The study examines students’ perceptions of their current educational and social experiences in New Zealand, tertiary education opportunities in New Zealand compared to those in their home countries, and what, if anything, might convince them to continue their tertiary studies in New Zealand after they complete their high school education. By answering these questions the study intends to create a snapshot of what factors are important to students in making decisions about their futures. The results should provide insights into how high schools and tertiary institutions could work together to better assist students transitioning from high school to work or further studies, either in their home countries or in New Zealand. Tertiary institutions and New Zealand education as a whole could benefit from having larger numbers of competent students with a high level of English ability join their domestic student body. It could be argued that these students are culturally and socially adjusted to the New Zealand education system and lifestyle, and could make a valuable contribution to their institution of choice from an economic and social perspective, as well as add a valuable element of culture to our local communities.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter provides an overview of national and international research into: the importance of international students to the New Zealand's education sector, views of international students on their choice of country as a study destination, views on their study experience and levels of satisfaction whilst in New Zealand, and an insight into their future study intentions. This chapter will also look at research which used the 'Push-pull' model (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) for categorising students' motivations around continuing their studies in their host country or returning to their home country.

### **2.1 Importance of international students to the New Zealand education sector**

The size of the world market for the international education sector is significant in terms of the number of international students who leave their country of origin and move to another country for the purpose of education. New Zealand is a small country both in terms of population and geography, and even though it trails behind its other Anglophone competitors in relation to sheer student numbers, compared to the USA, UK, Australia and Canada, one could argue that given the number of international students as a percentage of the domestic student population, New Zealand performs exceptionally well, hosting 1.7 % international students in 2011, which was considerably higher than in 2000 (0.4%). Competition for these students is fierce, but as long as New Zealand keeps its focus on quality, the New Zealand dollar does not spiral out of control, and as long as it remains perceived as a safe, friendly, picturesque study destination with a mild climate, international student numbers in New Zealand education worldwide should continue to increase. It is predicted that the demand for international education will increase from 1.8 million international students in 2000 to 7.2 million by 2025 (Böhm, Davis, Meares & Pearce, 2002) and education providers internationally will continue to position themselves in ways that attract as many international students as possible.

International education is New Zealand's fifth largest export sector, contributing \$2.6 billion to the New Zealand economy in 2012-13. The New

Zealand Government has identified a target of increasing the economic benefit to New Zealand from international students to \$5 billion by 2025 and the value of offshore education services to \$500 million (Education New Zealand, 2015). The benefits of international education to New Zealand's society, however, are broader than direct economic benefit. The internationalisation of New Zealand's curriculum, the interaction between New Zealand and international students (here and abroad), and the development of strong multi-national alumni relationships are aimed at helping New Zealand and New Zealanders play a strong part in a global society and economy in the future (Tertiary Education Strategy, 2014).

This study, 'Should I stay or should I go' is a regional one, focusing on the Bay of Plenty and Waikato regions, and the regional importance of international students to the tertiary landscape was reiterated in the Tertiary Intentions Strategy 2014 (TIS). This was a regional initiative supported by local industry, community, local government and agencies (Bay of Plenty Regional Council, Taupo District Council, Smart Growth, Priority One, Grow Rotorua & Toi EDA), and by the Bay of Plenty Tertiary Education Partnership (which comprises Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiāraangi, Bay of Plenty Polytechnic, University of Waikato and Waiariki Institute of Technology). It was clearly acknowledged in this strategy document that "The region should support the attraction of international students, recognising they are an important source of skills, knowledge and global links, as well as export revenue for education institutions, local communities and the region" (TIS, 2014).

From a regional perspective, in 2013, there were approximately 3,630 international students studying in the Bay of Plenty (constituting 3.8% of New Zealand's international student population). Overall, these students contributed approximately \$80.3 million to the region by way of tuition fees, living costs, tourism and other value-added activities associated with studying. Also, many of these students seek long-term residency and contribute to the overall growth and development of the region's workforce and community (TIS, 2014).

The tertiary landscape is forever changing, with ebbs and flows of student numbers in different programmes, job markets which fluctuate, industries which boom then decline – often influenced by the national and global economies. However, one factor that has remained constant over the last two decades is the

importance of international students in adding to the cultural diversity of our educational institutions and local communities. These students not only help form the future business networks for domestic students, but the economic contribution that they make to schools and tertiary institutions allows for the development of enhanced facilities and resources that benefit all students, both domestic and international. From primary school, right through to the tertiary education sector, these students play an important role in adding to the cultural richness of their campuses. Thus, quality educational experiences and pastoral care are essential to ensure international students' wellbeing. From a regional perspective, in a recent internal announcement, a long standing tertiary chief executive noted that:

A key factor in the present fiscal environment is the role of international students—something that until recently was not addressed with the importance it now warrants. Revenue from international students will significantly strengthen the financial position of the institution and the ability to invest in future development. International students are very important for other reasons, not least the internationalising of our campuses, preparing our graduates for what is now a global employment arena. International students are not a 'nice to have' and 'optional'. They must be a key component of the future institution's development and care and learning support of the international students must be to the highest possible standards. (Hampton, personal communication, March, 2016)

Simpson and Tan (2009) also noted that international education cannot be evaluated by economic measures alone, stating that they “cannot concede or condone an approach to evaluation that judges the effectiveness of educational initiatives solely by the extent to which they have been able to generate export income” (p. 6). With that in mind, it may be worth considering how we care for international students while they are here in New Zealand.

## **2.2 Quality assurance and pastoral care of international students**

Given the rapid growth of the export education industry and the fact that it was largely unregulated until the late 1990s, the industry suffered growing pains. Not

only were the vast numbers of international students starting to affect the quality of education that New Zealand students were receiving, but some of the educational institutions, receiving substantial income from international students, were failing to ensure their quality of experience. The lack of guidelines for care of these students, and isolated cases of student neglect resulted in the government intervening in 1999 with the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (NZQA, 2016). The code was designed to ensure that there was quality assurance in place for international students, and made providers subject to New Zealand Qualifications Authority audits. Following the introduction of the Code of Practice, Butcher, McGrath and Stock (2008) observed that “The New Zealand government has invested a significant amount of funding into the recruitment of international students, the professional development of those who work with international students, and research into the experiences of international students in New Zealand” (p. 235). According to the authors, quality assurance and the welfare of international students is paramount if New Zealand is going to continue to provide a quality educational experience and remain an attractive study destination.

In 2008, a report was commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the Department of Labour into the ‘Experiences of International Students in New Zealand’ to ensure that the needs of this growing number of students were being met. The research provided the opportunity to understand the international students’ experience of life in New Zealand. The Ministry of Education and the Department of Labour were particularly interested in examining the changes, since the 2003 survey, in the following areas: The general characteristics of international students; the self-reported academic performance or success of international students; the satisfaction of international students with educational, pastoral and support services, living conditions and social services; students’ experiences of working in New Zealand; and the future plans of international students, including their work plans (Deloitte & Touche, 2008). The results of the survey revealed that students were satisfied with their New Zealand education experiences, but that there was room for improvement, especially in the area of increasing the possibility for international students to interact with New Zealand students and potentially form friendships. The international students in homestays were much happier socially and thus performed better academically than their counterparts living with other

international students. The findings indicated that these social/cultural factors were often overlooked by educational institutions which were narrowly focused on the 'academic product' they offer. Student support and the pastoral care of these students now features highly on education providers' lists of priorities. This is a clear indication that the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students is as relevant now as it was in 1999 when it was first conceived.

### **2.3 Where the international students in New Zealand come from**

Due to its geographic proximity and close economic ties, the majority of international students still come from Asia, particularly from those economies undergoing rapid growth. Looking at education across all sectors (Education Counts, 2013), the top five source countries of fee-paying students in New Zealand are currently China, India, Japan, South Korea and Saudi Arabia. In regards to tertiary education enrolments, in 2013 almost 50,000 international students were enrolled with New Zealand tertiary education organisations. Of these, the top five source countries were China, India, the USA, South Korea, and Malaysia (Ministry of Education, 2013).

Students from each of these countries have their own drivers and motivations for completing their education offshore, hence they need to be approached with a different strategy in mind when discussing education options in New Zealand with them. As the economies of China and India grow, so could the demand for quality western style tertiary education. Education providers globally are realising that tailoring their courses to suit the individual needs of each country is a viable way to attract international students, particularly in postgraduate education. Some international managers in the Bay of Plenty are predicting that the size of the Indian market will eclipse the Chinese market in the foreseeable future (Young, Education Tauranga, personal communication, October 2015).

### **2.4 Student satisfaction**

In order to measure whether the study environments educational institutions provide to students are meeting their personal and academic needs, a number of surveys have been conducted over the recent years. These surveys explore international students' satisfaction with their learning experiences in New Zealand. Results of a study by Campbell and Li (2008) revealed that more than 85% of

international students in New Zealand were Asian in origin at that time and “the level of satisfaction of Asian international students with their learning experiences in New Zealand has been of enormous concern for the New Zealand export education industry” (p. 375). In a large national survey completed by Berl for the Ministry of Education in 2013 (Ministry of Education, 2013), the findings showed that overall, international students studying at universities and ITPs in New Zealand were satisfied with their experiences of living and learning in New Zealand. A substantial 88% of university students were very satisfied or satisfied with their experiences and 90 % of ITP students were very satisfied or satisfied with their experiences. Further, 78 % of university respondents and 84 % of ITP respondents would recommend their New Zealand institution to students who are thinking of studying overseas (Generosa, Molano, Stokes & Schulze, 2013). Similar results were observed in a large study commissioned by Education New Zealand the ‘International Student Barometer’ (i-grad survey), conducted across the secondary school and tertiary sectors in 2015 (Education New Zealand, 2015). These studies observed high levels of student satisfaction across different education sectors in New Zealand which is positive for the future of the industry. It also highlights the fact that international student satisfaction levels should remain at the forefront of the minds of all education providers.

Moving countries to study is a big decision in student lives. Once students have moved to a foreign country, how do they maintain their happiness and what factors will motivate them to stay? Oishi and Diener (2001) report that European college students appear to gain and maintain their wellbeing by achieving goals that they pursue for their own enjoyment and fun, whereas Asian college students seem to attain and maintain their wellbeing by achieving goals that they pursue to make important others happy and meet the expectations of others (p. 7). In a study into international student satisfaction in New Zealand in 2007, Deloitte and Touche (2008) found that students who had been living in New Zealand for longer (and were therefore potentially better assimilated into New Zealand society and culture) were more likely to perceive New Zealand education as good value for money and were also more likely to recommend New Zealand as a place to study. Life satisfaction in New Zealand was also strongly correlated to students’ self-assessment of their progress in their studies, the number of New Zealand friends

they had, and the level of support they received.

Other national research suggests that the strongest influence on international students' satisfaction, both in New Zealand universities and ITPs, was their learning experience:

While learning experience was the strongest influence on student satisfaction, living and support service experiences should not be ignored. These areas also influenced the overall student experience. They are thus potential improvement areas that could be leveraged in order to raise student satisfaction levels. (Generosa et al., 2013, p.11)

This is also noted in the work of Zhang and Brunton (2007), who are adamant that “recognition of the influence of sociocultural factors beyond the learning experience itself is vital in facilitating mutually beneficial outcomes for Chinese international students and the international education industry in New Zealand” (p. 124).

## **2.5 Maintaining high standards for international students in New Zealand**

Growth in the potential economic benefit to New Zealand from international education assumes that New Zealand is successful in expanding its level of provision of academic support, pastoral care, and facilities which are all vital in attracting a proportional share of the growth in international student demand (du Plessis, Chen & Toh, 2012). Deloitte and Touche (2008) suggest that in order to achieve this growth in student numbers it would be worthwhile to investigate developing an action strategy to more successfully market New Zealand's advantages, including highlighting New Zealand's well-regarded institutions, safe environments and a reasonable cost of living. At a local and institutional level, institutions should be actively encouraged to explore ways in which the wider community and New Zealand students can be better integrated with international students. This may involve institutions developing programmes for assisting local students in gaining experience of international students, other cultures and cultural sensitivities. Simpson and Tan (2009) also note that there are “strong suggestions, that tertiary institutions would be well advised to present their product and service

offering to international students as an integrated proposition rather than just a list of qualifications and courses” (p. 19). They also reveal other important factors such as the reputation of the institution, the physical and social environment, the approachability of staff, and meeting and exceeding students’ expectations once they have arrived.

## **2.6 Leaving home and choosing a study destination – Push-Pull factors**

When looking at the motivations underpinning international students’ decisions to continue their studies in New Zealand or to return home it is important to understand that there are a myriad of factors in play. Some decisions are based on emotional or personal motivators, and some are financial, or professional (Hazen & Alberts, 2006). Family, friends, teachers and agents all have some kind of influence on students’ decision-making processes. Some students want to study in an attractive physical environment while sometimes a decision can be based largely on academic criteria of what a student is hoping to achieve. Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) contend that the decision to study abroad involves three distinct stages: (a) the student decides that he or she wants to study internationally rather than locally; (b) the choice of country; and (c) the choice of institution. Skyrme and White (2011) noted in their study of Chinese students at a New Zealand University, “the effects of these students’ decision to undertake study abroad were potentially infinitely diverse responses to complex variables, such as personality, prior experience and choices made about their study” (p. 189).

The global pattern of international student flow may be explained by a combination of push and pull factors (Lee, 1966) that encourage students to study overseas. The push-pull model was originally used in the theory of migration to explain the factors influencing the movement of people from country to country. This model has been used to understand international student flows (McMahon, 1992), the decision or motivation to study abroad (Maringe & Carter, 2007), and students’ choice of an overseas study destination (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Altbach (1998) presented what he called the push-pull model for international student mobility. He pointed out, in relatively simplistic terms, that some students were pushed by unfavourable conditions in their home countries, while others were pulled by scholarships and other opportunities in host countries. Push factors

operate within the source country and initiate a student's decision to undertake international study. Pull factors operate within a host country to make that country relatively attractive to international students. Some of these factors are inherent in the source country, some in the host country and others in the students themselves (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). McMahon (1992) suggested that the push-pull model is dependent on the level of economic wealth, the degree of involvement of a home country in the world economy, the priority placed on education by the government of the home country, and the availability of educational opportunities in that country. Major components of the pull model, in contrast, are the economic link between home and host countries, the availability of scholarships from host nations, and political and cultural links between home and host countries (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

Although the 'push-pull' model is currently relevant, it needs to be expanded, as questioning students about their future plans reveals a complex decision-making process which is influenced by multiple push and pull factors (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Rather than limit these factors to *push factors from the home country* and *pull factors for the host country*, the other research which has been conducted around the flows of international students between countries also shows that there are significant *pull factors for the home country* and *push factors from the host country* which must be taken into consideration (Alberts & Hazen, 2005; Fang & Wang, 2014).

The next section will highlight what previous studies have found these factors to be. For ease of reference, each of these sections will be categorised under four sections: Academic motivations, Professional & Financial motivations, Physical Environment (where relevant), and Personal & Human Motivations.

## **2.7 Push factors – home country**

These are motivating factors to *leave home* to study overseas, or in the case of those already studying overseas, reasons to *not return* to the home country.

### ***2.7.1 Academic Motivations***

The lack of educational opportunities, or the quality of educational opportunities in their home country, as a major motivation to leave, is a *push factor* for many

students. This was noted in studies by Fang and Wang (2014), Hazen and Alberts, (2006) and Mazzarol and Soutar (2002). Fang and Wang also noted that when it is largely accepted that students are lacking educational opportunities at home, the *family pushes* the student to go and get an international education.

### ***2.7.2 Professional & Financial Motivations***

For some students, political and economic environment such as perceived lack of freedom in some countries or political and economic instability can play a role in the decision to leave their home country. These trends were noted in a number of studies international including Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), Alberts and Hazen, (2005), Maringe and Carter (2007), as well as Li and Bray (2007). Furthermore, in their studies on international university students in the USA, Hazen and Alberts (2006) noted that a lack of good job opportunities at home was a motivating factor for students to go abroad and further their professional careers, although Butcher (2002) found that many students who returned home with expectations of landing well-paying and high-status jobs struggled to do so.

### ***2.7.3 Personal & Human Motivations***

When considering a study destination, many factors influence a student's decision to leave home. Deloitte and Touche (2008) reported that friends', agent's and teachers' recommendations were highlighted as major influencing factors by the international students currently studying in New Zealand. This was re-iterated in the i-grad survey (2015) which found that students were most likely to have applied to their school because their parents/guardian (45%) or an education agent/representative (31%) encouraged them to go.

Hazen and Alberts (2006) and Skyrme and White (2011) also noted that family expectations played a major part in students' decision-making, and Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) also cited the influence of friends, parents and agents on selecting a destination country. The authors reported that the decision to study abroad is frequently a family decision that involves several decision-makers and that with younger students especially parental influence is particularly strong when students are choosing a destination country. In contrast, Lee (2014) found that this was not a major factor in Taiwanese students' decision-making.

Just as family can be a huge influence in leaving home, for some students it can equally be a reason not to return home, especially in the case of more mature students finishing off their tertiary studies. Butcher (2002) noted that returnees in this research found it extremely stressful to return to their families and live with their parents after years of independence. “Many returnees in this research identified that returning to live under their parents’ roof was the most difficult re-entry issue they faced. Some of these tensions can be attributed to the social expectations inherent in filial piety” (p. 355). He also noted that friendships students expected to continue on their return did not exist in the same way that they imagined.

## **2.8 Pull Factors – Study Destination**

The factors that can attract students to an overseas study destination are as much the reasons to come initially as well as to stay on in the study destination of choice. In selecting the host country, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) argue that there are 6 main factors that influence students’ decision-making: knowledge and awareness of the country, personal recommendations, cost, study environment, geographic proximity and social links. These motivations can also be grouped under academic, professional and financial, physical environment and human and personal factors. How much influence each of these factors has on a student’s decision depends on the individual.

### ***2.8.1 Academic Motivations***

Of all the motivating factors influencing students’ desires to study abroad, most commonly cited are academic motivations. The perception that international education can raise the economic and social status of graduates, limited access to education in home countries, and the perception of the quality of education in home host countries are key factors (Fang & Wang, 2014; Hazen & Alberts, 2006; i-grad survey, 2015; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Skyrme & White, 2011; Srikatanyoo & Gnoth, 2005).

Fluency in the language of the host country is also a strong pull factor for students choosing their study destination. Not only do students want a quality education and social experience, to further themselves professionally, many students cite the desire to master a foreign language (Baláz & Williams, 2004; Fang

& Wang, 2014; i-grad survey, 2015).

Students do consider the characteristics of the individual institution when choosing a study destination. The results of the i-grad survey (2015) indicate, that for the most part, international students have a largely positive experience of their education in New Zealand. Factors which students take into consideration when choosing a tertiary provider, include, but not limited to: institutional reputations for quality, credentials awarded, major fields, entrance requirements, willingness to recognise previous qualifications, teachers' quality, employment situation of graduates, tuition fees, course arrangements and learning material, programme reputation, facilities and campus environment, accommodation, advanced research facilities, and provision of degrees that were recognised by employers (Fang & Wang, 2014; Lee, 2014; Li & Bray, 2007; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002 ). Deloitte and Touche (2008) identified student support and pastoral care by the individual institutions as areas of their education experience that students were very happy with in New Zealand. Similarly, Hazen and Alberts (2006) recognised that academic freedom was a real drawcard for students. The i-grad survey also found that the ability to attend a university or other institutions after high school overseas was a drawcard for students. This last finding is particularly relevant to the current study. Zhang and Brunton (2007) found that socio-cultural factors (i.e., personal and human) actually outweighed the institutional qualities and academic indicators in student decision-making.

### ***2.8.2 Professional & Financial Motivations***

Not only do students leave for international study destinations to further themselves academically, but they also do this for professional reasons. Soon (2008) reported that wage competitiveness in New Zealand compared to the host country was a major influence on returning international students. Similarly, in a study of Thai postgraduate students, Pimpa (2003) expressed the view that the major factors influencing students' choices of international education were "the increased potential for promotion at work, opportunities for better salary, and the positive perception of people in Thailand toward overseas graduates" (p. 183). The finding that international students perceived that a degree from a western university would improve their job prospects back home was corroborated by Albert and Hazen

(2005) and Skyrme and White (2011). Similarly, Baláž and Williams (2004) and Fang and Wang (2014) also reported that students perceived that there were better job opportunities in the study destination.

Cost is a consideration for students when deciding on a study destination. Students do ‘shop around’ to get the most they can for their dollar in education and the strengthening New Zealand dollar could make New Zealand a less attractive destination when competing with the likes of Australia, USA and Great Britain. Singh, Schapper and Jack (2014) note that the low cost of living in New Zealand is a major drawcard for students from Malaysia, and in a study of overseas destination choice in Taiwanese students cost of educational fees was identified as the *number one* factor for students when making a decision (Lee, 2014). University fees aside, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) report that students must also consider the cost of living in a country and the availability of part-time work in order for students to make their overseas education affordable. In their study, this combined financial cost emerged as a drawcard for students when choosing a study-destination country. Cost was also mentioned as an important factor for international students when selecting a school (i-grad survey, 2015).

### ***2.8.3 Physical Environment***

Research shows that the perception that New Zealand is a clean, green and beautiful country helps it stand out as a study destination. The lifestyle, travel and adventure, and beautiful scenery is particularly important to European and South American students according to surveys of international students in New Zealand (Baláž & Williams, 2004; Deloitte & Touche, 2008; i-grad survey, 2015). Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), and Hazen and Alberts (2006) argue that the local environment influences the attractiveness of a host country to a potential international student.

That New Zealand is perceived to be a safe environment also plays a major part in students’ decision-making, especially for Asian cultures which are very risk averse. In a survey of Chinese students at tertiary institutions in Auckland, Zhang and Brunton (2007) found that those who were most satisfied with their education experience were those who also reported that they “felt safe” in their environment (58%). A low crime rate, safety and little chance of racial discrimination rated highly among respondents in the survey by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002). This was

re-iterated amongst international students attending university in Malaysia (Singh et al., 2014) and in New Zealand (Deloitte & Touche 2008; i-grad survey, 2015).

#### ***2.8.4 Personal & Human Motivations***

Just as ties to family and friends can be a main reason to return home, strong relationships with host families and friends in a host country can encourage students to remain in the host country. Singh, Schapper and Jack (2014) noted the significance of friends' experiences when making decisions about choice of study destination. Students with established friendships in the host country reported to be happier than those who do not have the same level of friendship. This was re-iterated by Lee (2014), who found that friends have a large influence in student's destination choice.

Research shows that international students living in good homestay environments, where students feel supported and become a member of the family, are happier than those living by themselves or with other international students. According to Zhang and Brunton (2007) homestay situations "enhance opportunities for interaction with host nationals and so help students to familiarise themselves with the host culture and improve their English skills" (p. 128). This satisfaction with homestays was also noted by Deloitte and Touche (2008). Butcher (2008) reported that quality homestay experiences provided students with the opportunity to develop deep and lasting friendships with some domestic students. Another contributor to student comfort levels in New Zealand has to do with the student's contact with their natural family. The i-grad survey (2015) revealed that international students living with their natural family in New Zealand are even happier than those living with host families.

A student's personal development and changing world view also have a bearing on whether they stay on in a country in which they study. Butcher (2002) notes that "students' time in New Zealand had altered their worldview: Some no longer subscribed to societal expectations, and others radically changed their religious worldview" (p. 355). This can be coupled with the view that their overseas study journey "is a further step toward independence, individuation, and freedom from parents" (p. 360). Fang and Wang (2014) and Skyrme and White (2011) made a similar observations about students' desire to become an international person. In

addition, for many European students, a country such as New Zealand provides a similar culture and shared religion and food, and these factors have a strong effect on many students' choice of study destination (Singh et al., 2014).

## **2.9 Push Factors – Study destination**

Once students have decided that a move overseas will in some way be beneficial to them and they have selected the study destination which best suits their needs and move to their new home, a new series of factors are unearthed that make remaining in their host country less desirable. Some of these factors students are prepared for, others come as a surprise. Some students suddenly realise that 'the grass is not as green on the other side of the fence' as they thought it was, and they start to yearn for the comforts of home (Alberts & Hazen, 2005).

### ***2.9.1 Academic Motivations***

For students assimilating to a new living and study environment, and language difficulties are also reported to be a key factor pushing students away from New Zealand, especially for those who have just arrived. The longer students stay and master the language, the less it becomes an issue. Lack of language ability affects abilities to make friends and achieve academic goals. Asian students tend to struggle more with life in an English speaking country than Europeans, who arrive with a higher level of English fluency (Alberts & Hazen, 2005; Skyrme & White, 2011; Smith & Rae, 2006; Toyokawa & Toyokawa 2002 ). In a study by Zhang and Brunton (2007) students reported that it was necessary to have at least 12 months of English tuition in New Zealand before starting their course of study. Orsman and Orsman (1994) go one step further and look into the difficulties of students adapting to New Zealand English. New Zealand English has its own distinct accent and pronunciation which is challenging for students who are often used to the British or American pronunciation as a consequence of their English studies back home. Other concerns which arise from language difficulties may include being misunderstood by others, misunderstanding others, and being unable to fully express thoughts and feelings (Baláz & Williams, 2004; Butcher et al., 2008; Marilyn & Renee, 2000; Sawir et al., 2008).

Language differences aside, students also need to contend with differences in education systems and teaching methods, both of which can be challenging for

the student. Ward (2001) reported that differences in education systems and unfamiliar social norms and values influence international students' learning experiences in the classroom. In this study of Asian students at Lincoln and Canterbury Universities, Ward reported that 80% of students cited different teaching styles compared to those in their home as a significant study problem, such as adapting to the New Zealand system. Many students remarked on difficulties in group discussions with New Zealand students. Adapting to a new institution's set of rules was also observed by Sawir et al. (2008). Loorparg, Tait, Yates and Meyer (2006) noted that the Eurocentric curricula in New Zealand disadvantage non-European students in achieving their academic goals. This finding was corroborated by Campbell and Li (2008), who reported that Asian students have to make every effort to adapt to make sense of the classroom culture in New Zealand tertiary institutions. Similar results were reported in studies by Toyokawa and Toyokawa (2002), Baláž and Williams (2004) and the i-grad survey (2015). Generosa et al. (2013) noted that the lack of knowledge of how the system works was also a major concern for international students.

Campbell and Li (2008) noted that the perceived casual attitude of New Zealand students towards their National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) studies and group assignments presented a great source of frustration for international students. Laziness on the part of some group members (predominantly New Zealand students) affected their otherwise good grades.

There is also a range of academic issues relating to individual institutions which negatively affect students' views of their study experience. These include: excessive overall class numbers, where students felt there were too many students in one class, which affects a teacher's ability to offer international students additional support (Smith & Rae, 2006). The lack of learning support and accessibility of some lecturers was an issue brought up in the research by Campbell and Li (2008) and Skyrme and White (2011). Deloitte and Touche (2008) found that students did not believe as strongly that teachers understood the problems of international students or that teachers made a special effort to help international students which, in turn, contributes to the idea that students need to feel there is a good level of academic support to feel settled in their study environment.

### ***2.9.2 Professional & Financial Motivations***

As much as cost is a factor in deciding on a study destination, financial stress once having arrived, is also a factor for leaving the study destination. School fees are known and relatively fixed for high school students when making their decisions to choose a study destination. However, high living costs in New Zealand, (e.g., housing, food, social spending and public transport) is a particular concern especially to those students living independently from families or host families (i-grad survey, 2015). Zhang and Brunton (2007) also found that although the majority of international students were satisfied with their lives in New Zealand, some were concerned with the high cost of living. This was especially the case with some Chinese students, who are reported as lacking a number of financial management skills due to lack of experience of living independently from their parents. Deloitte and Touche (2008) reported that 23% of international students in their sample found payment for their education in New Zealand very difficult or extremely difficult and only 41% of respondents thought that New Zealand, as an overseas destination, was good value for money. Similarly, Andrew Butcher et al. (2008) found that Asian students in particular felt that the education they receive in New Zealand is generally of a good standard and that accommodation and living were generally good but a little more costly than students would like. On top of this, bureaucratic issues, especially around the difficulties experienced while obtaining visas, and changes and restrictions associated with visas were brought up as issues by Maringe and Carter (2007), and Fang and Wang (2014). These bureaucratic processes prove to be frustrations for students and are a factor in their decision on whether or not to continue their studies in New Zealand.

### ***2.9.3 Personal & Human Motivations***

Motivations to leave the host country include a big dose of homesickness often attributed to the loss of friendships back home or loneliness experienced in the study destination (Fang & Wang, 2014; Generosa et al., 2013; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland & Ramia, 2008; Sawir et al., 2008; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002). The concept of loneliness is summed up by Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) who state that in migration “one ceases to belong to the world one left behind, and does not yet belong to the world in which one has nearly arrived” (p. 23). This concept of loneliness is the result of a discrepancy between desired

and actual social relationships in the host country (Hawkley, Burleson, Berntson & Cacioppo, 2003; Ward, 2001).

Difficulties making friends is cited as a big area of dissatisfaction for international students in most international student satisfaction surveys (Generosa et al., 2013; i-grad survey, 2015). Foreign students not feeling 'equal' to 'Kiwi' students was also noted in a study by Skyrme and White (2011). Students often attribute this lack of ability in making friends to there being too many international students at the school and due to the fact they come and go, New Zealand students are reluctant to engage in new friendships, and a lack of opportunities to mix with local students and therefore an unsatisfactory social life. As a result, many of the international students feel that they mostly have students from their own countries or foreigners as friends (Alberts & Hazen, 2005; Butcher et al., 2008; Campbell & Li, 2008; i-grad survey, 2015; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002; Ward, 2001).

Pastoral care issues also arise as issues facing students. Byrne's (2001) study of learning experiences of Asian and Caucasian students indicates that Asians were more depressed, had more fears of loss of face, held more negative beliefs about the self and the world, and were perceived to have received less social support when compared to Caucasians. This notion was also reiterated in the study by Smith and Rae (2006).

Racism is also cited as an issue for students at both high school and in the tertiary environment. In the i-grad survey (2015), 14% of international students felt they had been treated negatively or very negatively by fellow students and in some cases, teachers. Smith and Rae (2006) talk about the "fears and negative perceptions" of domestic students towards international students (p. 36). Furthermore, in an American context, Alberts and Hazen (2005) noted that feelings of alienation were reinforced by concerns of racism, a notion which was mentioned on several occasions and in several contexts by their survey respondents. Butcher et al. (2008) found that incidents of racial discrimination reported by Asian students tended to have greater impact on them than the positive attitudes and friendships they encountered.

## **2.10 Pull Factors – Home Country**

As much as certain factors drive students away from home, once students reach their chosen destination, there are as many factors pulling them back home again. Students may not have given serious consideration to some of these factors prior to leaving their home country. However, these factors become relevant when students are in an unfamiliar study environment.

In the literature, some of the most commonly cited factors that pull students back home are personal and human motivations, but as in all decisions, there is a range of factors which influence students' decisions.

### ***2.10.1 Professional & Financial Motivations***

Professional factors feature strongly in students' motivations to leave home, but rarely do professional factors feature in students' motivations to return home. For example, Alberts and Hazen (2005) found that "it is rare for international students to believe they would be better off professionally in their home countries" (p. 40). This finding was reiterated by Maringe and Carter (2007). Financial factors play a part in students' decisions to return home as well, with a number of studies highlighting the fact that students are aware that it is more expensive to gain their qualifications overseas, so it is predominantly those students who believe that the overseas study experience and their overseas qualifications will be a worthwhile investment in their academic or professional futures (Li & Bray, 2007; Soon, 2008).

### ***2.10.2 Physical Environment***

When arriving in a foreign environment, some students adapt better than others; culture shock setting in after the novelty wears off and students miss aspects of home. In Alberts and Hazen's study of students looking at migrating to the USA after their studies, homesickness or "feeling more comfortable in the country of origin" is cited by every student without exception as a factor to return to their home country (Alberts & Hazen, 2005, p. 141). Not only this, but traditional food becomes even more important when international students are away from home. It "seems to run far deeper than simply taste and nutrition; instead, food becomes almost a surrogate for the familiar culture that is missing" (Alberts & Hazen, 2005, p. 145).

### ***2.10.3 Personal Human motivations***

Motivating factors to return to the home country seem to be mostly psychological or emotional. Family and friends feature very highly in many students' responses about what is pulling them home again (Li & Bray, 2007). Butcher (2002) observes that "some relationships between the returnees and their parents were strengthened while they were overseas; being absent from their parents helped the students to appreciate their parents all the more" (p. 359). This observation was confirmed by Alberts and Hazen (2005) who noted that "family and friends in the home country acted as a strong force drawing them back, and several students expressed the idea that family and friends become more important once you are away from them" (p. 147). This idea is also supported by Fang and Wang (2014), who found that family pressure to return home is a big driver for students to leave their study destination.

### **2.11 Prior studies and gaps in the literature**

The literature review suggests that similarly themed studies have been undertaken in the past. However, previous national and international research did not focus on high school students. Also, past research sought to discover motivations for different outcomes, such as immigration, rather than transition to tertiary study.

Of international studies reviewed in this section, the one that provides a good starting point for my work is that of Hazen and Alberts (2006). This study showed that economic and professional factors typically dominate among incentives to stay in the US while personal and societal factors tend to draw students back home. There are four distinct differences between this research and my study. Firstly, the Hazen and Alberts (2006) study was conducted in the USA, so the environments students are experiencing are different. Secondly, the Hazen and Alberts study focuses on international university students rather than high school students. Thirdly, the study examines a cohort of students who may remain in the country permanently to transition to work rather than continue their study.

Nationally, Simpson and Tan's (2009) study of Chinese university students' satisfaction in New Zealand, although relevant to my study, focused on tertiary students from only *one* country. In addition, the study did not delve deeper into students' future study intentions. Similarly, Butcher, McGrath and Stock (2008) focused on Asian students returning home after studying in New Zealand. Again

the study explored forging ongoing relations with former international university students. Further, Soon (2008) focused on tertiary students immigrating to New Zealand on completion of their studies. This study revealed that the initial intention prior to leaving for abroad is the most important factor determining whether or not a student intends to return home after completing his/her tertiary education. In addition, the results revealed that students' perceptions on comparative aspects of the home and host country, such as wage competitiveness, working environment, opportunities for knowledge application and lifestyle, also contribute significantly to their intention to return home.

Most recent, and perhaps most relevant for my work, is a study conducted in secondary schools in 2015 looking at whether international students are satisfied with their educational experience to date (i-grad survey, 2015). The study investigated over 2000 international students aged 16 years of age and older, and looked at their level of satisfaction with their current high school education experience and asked them about their future study plans. The study identified a real opportunity for tertiary providers to perhaps attract more potential students to stay and continue their studies in New Zealand. It could be argued that from a tertiary education standpoint, on top of the 26% of students who were yet to make a decision on where to study when they finished high school in New Zealand, the 26% of students who already intended to stay in New Zealand had a choice of where they could study in New Zealand, and perhaps, given the right information, could be swayed towards one tertiary provider or another. Similarly, for the 15% of students who intend to study offshore it would be helpful to know why they selected that country over New Zealand, and what, if anything could New Zealand tertiary providers could do/have done to keep them here? Taken together, these last two categories of students provide a pool of 41% of all international high school students over the age of 16 currently studying in New Zealand who might remain in New Zealand if their needs are met.

The i-grad survey (2015) revealed that although students were asked what they were planning to do after their high school studies, the study did not examine where specifically students planned to go, what motivated them to make the decision they made and what, if anything, could convince them to stay. This is the gap that my

study seeks to address at a regional level. My study is localised around the Bay of Plenty and Waikato areas where a unique tertiary partnership exists between two polytechnics, a wānanga and a university, namely Awanuiarangi, Bay of Plenty Polytechnic, Waiariki Institute of Technology and the University of Waikato. The Waikato district has WINTEC and a number of private training institutes as well. This unique environment itself could be a major influencing factor in students' decision-making.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This section describes the research methodology and presents discussions about the following issues: the research question, the aim of the research, the research design, method for focus group, method for online survey, ethical issues and limitations.

### **3.1 Research question**

When considering the research question two basic questions were considered: Firstly, is it “limited in scope to certain times, places and conditions” and secondly, “a researchable question is usually a small fragment of a larger question”(Bouma & Ling, 2004, p. 14).

The question this study seeks to answer is:

*What are the motivating factors underpinning the reasons international students studying at high schools in New Zealand decide to transition onto tertiary studies in New Zealand or to return home?*

A key influence on this question is Zoltan Dörnyei’s (2014) recent work on Retrodictive Qualitative Modeling (RQM) which focuses on how researchers are not approaching data collected in isolation (reasons), and rather that they explore the ‘common attractors’ (motivating factors underpinning the reasons) in the participants or groups of participants. The idea behind RQM is that by tracing back the reasons why the system has ended up with a particular outcome option one can produce a retrospective qualitative model of its evolution. Thus, each study, even around a common theme, can yield different results depending on a number of factors, including sample size, location, timing etc. Dörnyei’s idea was that the themes or ‘common attractors’ (in his study), in this case ‘motivating factors’ in this study, are more likely to repeat in future research, rather than just a list of reasons in isolation. Therefore, in the current study it is the groups of motivating factors in student decision-making that are the focus of the research. If these motivating factors repeat in this cohort on a regional level, they could well be relevant in a nationwide context. The order of focus group followed by survey data collection methods used when using RQM makes sense given the research question at hand. “By tracing back the reasons why the system has ended up with a particular outcome we produce a retrospective qualitative model of its evolution. It is this reversed

qualitative modeling element that gave the strategy its name: ‘Retrodictive Qualitative Modelling’ (Dörnyei, 2014, p. 85). To address the issue of generalising the findings to other samples, Dörnyei argues that when using RQM syntax model, if the respondent prototypes can be established, the prototypes could continue to exist in future cohorts of potential students, thus allowing for better chances of generating repeatable, hence more valid, results.

### **3.2 Aim of Research**

The aim of the research is to find out what the main motivating factors are for international high school students to continue onto tertiary studies in New Zealand, or why some students just prefer to return home. The rationale is that if the motivating factors are better understood, it could be possible to create an environment in New Zealand tertiary institutions to encourage more students to stay and study here.

International departments in schools and tertiary institutions are aware of how much time, effort and money is spent on international recruitment. The main benefit of this research will be to inform tertiary institutions how to create a tertiary environment that is more attractive to international students, and therefore encourage more to stay on for their tertiary studies. The question for the institutions then would be to assess if this change can be achieved, will it be at a lower cost than recruiting internationally.

Another driver for the research is to see if any evidence emerges which supports the idea that students who are already studying in New Zealand are already accustomed to the New Zealand way of life and education system. This could indicate that they may need less assimilation into tertiary study, have better English fluency and may require less pastoral care, hence possibly be in a better position to succeed in their studies. The added benefit is that international students add cultural diversity to tertiary institutions and the relationships made with their peers can form the basis of valuable international networks moving into the future. Thus, the aim of this study is to show that not only is it financially viable to recruit students domestically, but that this focus on domestic international student recruitment could have substantial social and cultural benefits, and could provide tertiary institutions with more able students.

### **3.3 Research Design**

The study uses a mixed method design with both focus groups and a survey yielding a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. The survey itself consists of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. “Mixing methods is often employed in order to compensate for the perceived shortcomings of stand-alone methods with the aim of either providing a more complete picture or enhancing coverage” (Barbour, 2008, p. 151). The qualitative method is the primary method and the quantitative data collection method is the secondary method.

As conducting qualitative research, Barbour (2008) “does not seek to recruit representative samples, but to encompass diversity, expanding sampling in this iterative fashion does not pose a problem in terms of generalizability, since statistical generalizability is not a goal in the first place” (p. 30). The evidence that will need to be collected to answer the research question will rely on the repetition of themes throughout both the focus groups and the follow up surveys of the larger cohort.

The study uses a purposive sample of international students over 16 years of age in the Bay of Plenty and Waikato regions. The goal of purposive sampling is not to randomly select participants from a population to create a sample but to focus on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest. For researchers pursuing mixed methods research designs, this is not considered to be a weakness but it is a choice. In this study, a homogeneous purposive sampling technique is used which aims to achieve a sample whose participants share similar characteristics (i.e., age, non-New Zealand ethnicity). A homogeneous sample is chosen because the research question is specific to the characteristics of the particular group of interest. Purposive sampling techniques can provide researchers with the justification to make generalisations from the sample that is being studied. However, such sampling can be prone to researcher bias but this is only a disadvantage when such judgements have not been based on clear criteria or theoretical framework—which is not the case in this study. One constraint in the sample used in this study is that due to ethical reasons, only students 18 and over could be used in the focus groups. The age of 18 was decided by the University of Waikato ethics committee due to the sensitive and personal nature of the questions

being asked and the personal contact between the researcher and the students. (This age limit was subsequently lowered to 16 for the online surveys, to be in line with other national research that had been conducted by Education New Zealand).

This led to a smaller sample size than was anticipated; these students are further along in their future study decision-making process. On average, many of them had been in New Zealand for a longer period of time. This means, that although their responses were very insightful, they may not have been representative of the views of the wider sample which included students aged 16 and over, many of whom had only recently arrived in the country.

The paradigm which was to be employed was interpretivist. Given the subjective nature of the research to be undertaken, it was more important to understand students' motivations to stay in New Zealand or return home, than just reporting their reasons.

Given that we are dealing with qualitative data, seeking an in-depth view of people's opinions or beliefs, the data will always be subjective. The special feature of this study is that it incorporates first phase focus group interviews (qualitative data) and an online survey (quantitative and qualitative data) to examine recurring patterns across a wider sample group. The key point here is that the research question is clear and the methodology used to collect and analyse the data is rigorous. "As with Magellan and the flat earth theory, evidence does not always stop the controversy that motivated research. Some people do not accept the evidence. Some argue that the research was not properly conducted. Some argue that research questions were not properly defined" (Bouma & Ling, 2004, p. 18). What that means for the design of this study is that *the process* by which the evidence is collected is considered as important as the evidence itself.

### ***3.3.1 Choosing a mixed methods approach***

Having worked with international students for almost two decades, it would be easy to assume what some of the motivators to stay and study in New Zealand are and to formulate a collection of questions to ask international high school students to confirm my assumptions. Similarly, it would be easy to consult a 'panel of experts' such as the international managers in the Bay of Plenty who form the education

marketing group Education Tauranga or those in Waikato Education International (W.E.I.). In such a case the questions would be formulated around experts' perceptions about what motivating factors for students are. Both of these approaches would have potentially introduced a level of bias in selecting relevant survey questions. It is for this reason that a different approach was adopted in this study, namely the focus group results were used to form the bulk of the survey questions in order to ensure that the questions targeted areas which the students themselves identified as being important.

Alberts and Hazen (2005) chose focus group interviews as their main research tool in their study of international students' future study and work intentions because "they allow the researcher to observe relatively natural conversations between people and make it possible for the participants to direct the conversation (Morgan, 1996). This was particularly important in this context as we did not want to lead the conversation according to our own preconceptions" (Alberts & Hazen, 2005, p. 135).

Some scholars have argued that a combination of qualitative and quantitative data is particularly beneficial as it allows the researcher to place very specific information about individuals within a more general context (Morgan, 1996). This combination of methods was used successfully by Hazen and Alberts (2006) in their study on international students returning to the USA as immigrants. The researchers concluded that "generating a questionnaire solely from our own experiences would have introduced biases associated with our particular demographic situation and perspectives" (p. 204). They therefore conducted six focus groups and a number of informal conversations with international students from a variety of disciplines and countries in order to gain further insights into the factors considered by students in their decision-making processes. "These focus groups yielded not only important results in terms of how individuals go about the decision-making process, but also generated the raw material from which to build our questionnaire" (p. 204). Therefore, it was decided to use a mixed method of conducting focus groups followed by an online survey in my study.

### ***3.3.2 Order of methods***

Due to the fact that the data sought is qualitative in nature, it was decided as

pertinent to begin with focus groups as the primary data collection method to minimise the bias in formulating survey questions. It is the complex and diverse make up of nationalities that makes focus groups the ideal choice as a data collection method. Morgan (1998) specifically recommends “using focus groups when dealing with issues of diversity because the results of a focus group can help develop an understanding of common experiences through sharing and comparison” (as cited in Ganster, 2011, p. 372).

In my study, the focus group interviews used a semi-structured interview approach. According to Mojtahed, Nunes, Martins, and Peng (2014), an interview is a technique used by qualitative researchers to elicit facts and knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation using a series of interview questions. In this case, it consisted of semi-structured discussions among 4-6 senior international high school students in a formal setting (Paine, 2015). Using this research technique, data were collected through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher, in this case – views of international students on their current education experiences and completing their tertiary studies in New Zealand. This technique also acknowledges the researcher's active role in creating the group discussion for data collection purposes (Morgan, 1996). The researcher was mindful of this when interacting with students. Given the respondents were international students this approach was deemed as one of the best ways to get students to interact; “several scholars have recommended the use of group-oriented approaches to address the needs of this population” (Yakunina, Weigold & McCarthy, 2010, p. 69). Group approaches to international students have been also used in studies by Lin and Yi (1997), Heggings and Jackson (2003) and Olivas and Li (2006). Having the group discussions semi-structured was less directive than other interviewing styles with structured question formats, but they still had enough guidance around the topic and type of data that the researcher was hoping to collect. Semi-structured interviews were successfully used by Skyrme and White (2011) in a longitudinal study of Chinese students at a New Zealand University. Given that research is essentially about finding and explaining patterns to help us understand phenomena and to measure similarities and differences (Paine, 2015), there still had to be a framework in which to guide the conversation and therefore the answers. In this case, ten open questions were formatted to ‘set the topic’, giving students a starting point and

making the whole process less threatening for them (Bordens & Abbott, 2011). More open flowing conversation and a wider array of answers stemmed from the initial question. In this case, the primary method of data collection was focus groups which served in a preliminary capacity in order to develop the content of the subsequent surveys (Morgan, 1996).

Respondents' answers were coded so as to see the emergence of common themes and patterns of answers to identify respondent 'types'. This is where Dörnyei's (2014) approach adds a deeper meaning to the method allowing the questions to be formulated to be relevant to those clusters of respondents. Dörnyei stresses that "we cannot predict in advance what these outcomes might be, when we see them we recognise them. The idea behind retrodiction is that by identifying the main emerging system prototypes we can work 'backwards' and pinpoint the principal factors that have led to the specific settled states" (p. 85).

Morgan (1996) agrees with this pairing of methods, but not the order of their use claiming that the "common reason for combining focus groups and surveys...[is that] focus groups are the primary method while surveys provide preliminary inputs that guide their application" (p. 135). Based on this research, the same order is therefore employed in the current study.

### **3.4 Method**

#### ***3.4.1 Focus groups***

The main purpose of the focus groups was to form the basis of the questions for the wider survey. The survey was developed for international departments in high schools in the Bay of Plenty and Waikato. The international managers had agreed previously to ask their international students who were over 16-years-old to participate in a survey exploring students' views about remaining in New Zealand to pursue their tertiary studies.

##### *3.4.1.1 Participants*

In order to get the buy-in from local schools, the international marketing cluster group Education Tauranga, made up of international managers from local Bay of Plenty schools, was approached in person to explain the aim of the research and seek members' assistance and their principals' permission to assemble a group of

international students aged 18 and over in order to conduct a focus group in October, Term 4, 2015.

Three local high schools had a large enough number of international students aged 18 and over and assembled a group of focus group participants. A breakdown of the demographic of focus group participants can be seen in Appendix 1, '*Table 1: Demographic of focus group respondents*'. The age of 18 was decided by the University of Waikato ethics committee due to the sensitive and personal nature of the questions being asked and the personal contact between the researcher and the students. (This age limit was subsequently lowered to 16 for the online surveys, to be in line with other national research that had been conducted by Education New Zealand).

A total of 14 students (five males and nine females) from three different high schools in Tauranga took part in focus group discussions. This is a very limited number of senior students in high school, so the international managers who agreed to allow their students to participate in this research invited senior students to attend a lunch time group discussion.

#### *3.4.1.2 Materials*

Ten questions were designed to elicit a wide range of responses (see Appendix 7). The first set of questions examined the factors pushing students away from their home country; the second set of questions looked at factors pulling students to New Zealand; the third set of questions looked at factors pushing students from New Zealand and factors pulling them back home again.

#### *3.4.1.3 Procedure*

Three focus groups were conducted over the space of two weeks in Term 4 between 21 October and 28 October 2015. The focus groups were conducted in breakout rooms or ESOL classes adjacent to the international departments during the school lunch break at students' high schools. Each discussion was about 45 minutes long. An additional 15 minutes were used for administration, such as completing consent forms and explaining the procedure. Focus groups one and two had five participants each and focus group three had four participants.

Each focus group member was given an 'information for participants' sheet

(Appendix 2) explaining the purpose of the research and given further contacts if they had any further questions or concerns. Each participant signed a consent form (Appendix 3). The participants were informed that they would be able to receive the published results if they requested them.

The focus group questions were designed as open questions in order to provide a very fluid, open and broad discussion, so no fixed questions were set other than setting the topic of discussion. Then further probing questions were used to elicit more detailed information. This was done with graded language suitable for the participants ( Bordens & Abbott, 2011; Burns, 2000; Cohen & ebrary, Inc, 2011; Morgan, 1996 ). Participants were encouraged to express their views on each topic, and told that there were no right or wrong answers. They were also encouraged to voice additional comments agreeing or disagreeing with other participants points of view. Although all participants are in similar situations (studying at a New Zealand school and living with a New Zealand family), it was acknowledged that each participant was an individual coming from a potentially different cultural perspective and world view.

If an answer was ambiguous, the researcher rephrased and summarised participants' responses and asked for confirmation from the student that this was indeed what they meant. The researcher paid close attention to the interactions between students, noting the areas of agreement or disagreement between them, and the interpretations other students made of fellow students' comments. Participants were asked to respect each other's points of view and not to discuss other focus group members' opinions or stories outside the confidentiality of the focus group discussion. At the start of the focus group interview each participant was allocated a number, and students were asked to say their participant number before speaking. If they forgot to do this, the researcher repeated their number at the end of their comment so as to be able to identify each individual respondent anonymously when reporting the results.

The group conversations were audio recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. Notes were also taken during the focus groups by the researcher. The results of the transcriptions across all three focus groups of participants were then entered into an Excel software spreadsheet, and coded into similar themes and

summarised. The frequency of occurrence of these themes was compared across students' nationalities. These results are reported in the 'Focus group findings' section of this study.

### **3.4.2 Online survey**

#### *3.4.2.1 Participants*

Collaboration for this study was sought through the international managers of high schools across the Bay of Plenty and Waikato regions. Members of Education Tauranga were approached in person at their end of year meeting in October 2015 to seek their buy-in, assistance in administering the survey and permission of their principals to approach their international students over the age of 16 to complete the survey. The members of Waikato Education International (W.E.I.) were approached by telephone and email.

Eight schools from the Bay of Plenty and five schools from the Waikato agreed to invite their students to take part in the online survey and they sent back their principals' consent forms and 158 students from seven schools from the Bay of Plenty and four schools from the Waikato region completed the online survey.

#### *3.4.2.2 Materials*

The questions for the survey were formulated *after* the results of the focus groups had been collated. Guidance was also sought from the creators of the national i-grad (2015) survey since my research looks more closely at an areas not covered at length by this previous study, the motivations behind the transition from High School to Tertiary study. The initial survey questions were emailed through to the head researcher in Wellington who made suggestions for improvement.

The themes which emerged from the responses which came out of the focus groups formed the basis of the online survey. Some areas, although interesting, did not require further investigation given that this study is focused on students' future study intentions and motivations to continue their tertiary studies in New Zealand or to return home. Additional themes which had been established through the literature review as being relevant to this cohort of students were also added to the survey. The survey questions were formulated keeping in mind that this study focuses less on current levels of satisfaction at school and more on the motivations

around students' choices of their future study destination. Also, the audience that could be interested in the results was considered when selecting the questions, in particular, what information would be useful to international managers at high schools and in tertiary institutions when talking to potential students about New Zealand, as a study destination or as a viable choice to continue their tertiary studies.

The survey questions were organised into three broad areas based around the 'push-pull' model of student motivations (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). The questions in section '*About you*' asked about student demographics such as, age, nationality, time in New Zealand and so on. The other two sections: *Why you decided to leave home and study overseas*, and *Future study plans* contained questions focused around student motivations to leave home, why they chose New Zealand as a destination versus other English speaking destinations, who influenced the decision, what they like and do not like about studying in New Zealand, what they intend to do when they are finished with their high school studies and what would encourage them to stay in New Zealand. There was a final question about students' level of happiness with their New Zealand study experience, but this area was not explored in depth as it was covered at length in the i-grad survey (2015). This survey naturally follows from where i-grad survey left off regarding students' future study intentions.

The questions were designed to be as straight-forward as possible, given that all respondents had English as their second language. The questions sought a level of agreement with a given statement using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Some questions allowed for multiple answers (i.e., students could tick as many options as applied to their situation). Other questions allowed students to elaborate on their answers by using comments boxes. In the *Future study plans* section, questions streamed into responses seeking further information about where students plan to study or work, and when they made this decision, before or after coming to New Zealand. Answering each question (except for open ended questions) was compulsory (i.e., the respondent could not progress to the following question without answering the current question). This approach was taken to ensure that a complete set of data could be collected rather than students opting out of questions to save time or to not

have to put much thought into their answers. A full list of survey questions can be seen in Appendix 8.

#### *3.4.2.3 Procedure*

The survey was opened to students during Term 1 (February) 2016. The link to the online survey, developed using 'Lime Survey' software, was emailed to the international managers of each of the participating schools in February 2016. The managers were instructed to ask international students who were over 16 years of age to complete the survey on school computers or personal devices. A number of managers emailed the link directly to students asking them to complete the survey in their own time. Others chose to have students complete the survey as an exercise at the start of their ESOL classes, and some brought the students into the international department at lunchtime to use the computers and complete the survey in a group setting.

Prior to completing the survey, the students were able to read about the purpose of the survey, were assured of their anonymity, advised where to view a copy of the completed research in the future, and who to contact in case they had any questions or concerns. They were also informed that participation in the survey was voluntary and their completion of the survey was deemed as their consent to participate. The survey took on average 15-20 minutes to complete.

#### *3.4.2.4 Sample Size*

In total, 158 students attempted the survey. Twenty three responses were incomplete, leaving a total of 135 completed responses for the analysis. At the start of the study, it was estimated that a minimum of 100 completed student responses would be necessary to yield reliable results. The sample size was estimated on the basis of the following information.

The total (potential) population of international students over the age of 16 in participating schools (excluding Rotorua) was 138 in the Bay of Plenty (106 of these students completed the survey) and 109 students in participating schools in the Waikato (29 of these students responded). Combined, this is a total possible population of 247 across the participating schools. Given that 135 students completed the survey, a response rate of 55% is at an acceptable level.

It was not possible to get an accurate count of all students over 16 in every school in the Bay of Plenty and Waikato regions at the exact time when the study was completed, so it is not known what the total population from which the sample was drawn could have been.

#### *3.4.2.5 Data analysis*

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS v.22) was used to analyse quantitative survey data. Frequencies of all responses were calculated and for some questions further analyses were completed by breaking down students' responses by region in New Zealand which students were studying in and wider geographical region of origin (i.e., Europe, Asia/Pacific and South America). Open ended questions and 'other' options were analysed qualitatively by coding the answers and categorising them into separate themes.

### **3.5 Ethical issues**

The research was given ethical approval by the University of Waikato Faculty of Education Ethics Committee.

#### ***3.5.1 Access to participants & informed consent***

This research required access to international students at high schools. Written consent was sought via the international manager and signed off by the principal who could advise their board of trustees. Information sheets were provided to *focus group* interview participants, outlining the research and the participants' role in it. A consent form was also provided to interview respondents prior to the interview commencing. Consent was also gained to audio-record the focus groups. For the *surveys*, the information for participants was provided in the introduction to the anonymous online survey. Students were alerted that completion of the survey was deemed as their consent to participate. The information for participants for both the focus group and the survey clearly stated in the opening paragraph that participation is voluntary. They were also advised that the research was part of the researcher's Master degree and that a copy of the thesis will be lodged in the UOW Research Commons Database. <http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/>

#### ***3.5.2 Anonymity/Confidentiality***

*Anonymity:* When the focus group responses were transcribed, numbers rather than

student names were used to protect the identity of respondents. Any identifying information was safeguarded by the researcher. For the online surveys an anonymous platform *Lime Survey* was used, so by the very nature of the survey tool, the responses were anonymous.

*Confidentiality:* Students answers are reported literally in the transcripts where student numbers were used to identify each speaker. Some of these answers are quoted in the results section. It is highly unlikely that students could be identified from their responses. In the information sheets and informed consent sheets it was stressed that while every effort would be made to ensure confidentiality, it could not be guaranteed and that students had the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

### ***3.5.3 Other ethical concerns relevant to the research***

One main concern is students' English ability. Forms and questions were written in straight-forward English, and the focus groups were conducted in language suitable for the students to understand the topic clearly. The researcher is a trained ESOL teacher with 20 years' experience dealing with international students and was mindful of this when speaking to the students and formulating the questions.

## **3.6 Limitations**

The researcher acknowledges that this is a *regional* study of a relatively small cohort of students compared to the number of students studying in New Zealand nationally, and is therefore careful not to extend conclusions to a national scale, but rather compare these regional findings with other national research which has been conducted.

The study is targeted at a particular demographic: International students over 16 years of age attending high school in the Bay of Plenty and Waikato regions. Only the major high schools with large numbers of international students were approached to participate in the study, and not all of them were able to or were willing to participate. It is also acknowledged that a large cohort of respondents is from the Bay of Plenty region, specifically Tauranga, and a much smaller cohort is from the Waikato, Hamilton, Waihi and Cambridge specifically, so care was taken not to draw too many conclusions specific to region unless there were very definite

regional trends.

A notable exception from this region is Rotorua. No schools from Rotorua were approached to participate as some of the thinking around the study was whether having University of Waikato sharing a campus with Bay of Plenty Polytechnic in Tauranga had an influence on student decision making versus a dedicated University campus in Hamilton. It must also be noted that at the time of this study, the local Rotorua institute of technology – Waiariki, had a substantial number of international students. This study does not include any findings on the transition of high school students in Rotorua to Waiariki Institute of technology. At the time of printing this study, Bay of Plenty Polytechnic and Waiariki Institute of Technology are now a merged entity known currently as Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology. For the purpose of this study students in the Bay of Plenty were asked about Bay of Plenty Polytechnic as a future study destination as the merger had not yet taken effect.

It also must be noted that the timing of the focus groups and online surveys are different. The focus groups were conducted at the end of Term 4, which ensured that all participants had been in New Zealand for at least 5 months. The online surveys were conducted in February, Term 1, which means many students had only just arrived at their New Zealand high schools. Some of these students would not only be lacking the English ability to cope with an online survey written in English, but they may have also been lacking the knowledge and experience to comment on the high school and tertiary education systems in New Zealand.

A difference in age must also be taken into consideration. The focus groups were conducted with students aged 18 and over (hence the small cohort). These students were in their last year of high school, so had clear ideas about their future study intentions. Further consent and amendments to the research proposal were sought after the focus groups were conducted in order to be able to survey students aged 16 years of age and over in line with other national surveys of international surveys which had been conducted in New Zealand. This amendment was approved and ensured a larger sample, but with the younger aged students also comes a lack of experience and they are further away from needing to know their future study intentions, so this sample had the potential to yield different results from that of the

senior students surveyed in the focus groups.

Although focus group findings were mainly used to formulate the questions for the survey, the senior students did provide some very valuable insights into the views of international high school students on continuing their tertiary education in New Zealand.

## **Chapter 4: Focus Group Findings**

Three focus groups were conducted over the space of two weeks in Term 4 2015, across three different high schools. The purpose of the focus groups was to seek the views of students towards their studying and living overseas in four broad areas, based around the ‘push-pull’ model of student motivations (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). The first set of questions was around factors pushing them from their home country, then factors pulling them to New Zealand. I then looked at factors pushing them from New Zealand and factors pulling them back home again. There were ten questions were very general looking at eliciting as wide a range of responses as possible.

### **4.1 Demographics of respondents**

As can be seen in Table 1 (Appendix 1), most (12) of the respondents were 18 years old, one was 19 and one was 20. Students came from a variety of countries, namely China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Thailand, Germany, Papua New Guinea and Ethiopia. Two students had been in New Zealand for less than a year, while the majority (10) of students had been in New Zealand between 3-4 years. Five students intended to continue their tertiary studies in New Zealand, five intended to return to their home to study, two were bound for another overseas study destination and three were undecided.

### **4.2 Push factors from their home country**

#### ***4.2.1 Motivations to leave home and study overseas***

The biggest driver for students to leave their home countries had been that they were *not happy with the education system back in their home country*. Eight students, predominantly from Asian countries, commented that school back home is very stressful and very competitive. A re-occurring theme amongst these respondents was that the education systems are very one dimensional, focused on the learning of facts and data which is then checked with endless testing and that there is very little room for self-expression. Three students commented on the lack of respect teachers have for their students and a perception that the student – teacher relationship is very one sided. Respect is demanded from the students, but little is shown in return. As a result of this dissatisfaction, two students were failing in this system and some were very honest that this led to bad behaviour on their part which

resulted in them being ‘sent away’ with little choice of their own to complete their studies overseas.

The exception to this trend to head overseas for academic reasons was from the German student who came to New Zealand for personal development reasons, and were satisfied with the German education system which is not only highly advanced, but almost free to German nationals. *Personal growth* (2 students) as well as to *improve their English* (4 students) were also cited as reasons to leave home, but these personal drivers did not feature as prominently in their decision-making as the academic reasons: *to improve future study / work opportunities* – (6 students) and *better study opportunities overseas* (5 students).

#### **4.2.2 Influencers**

*Parents* were cited as the biggest influence on their decision to leave home (10 students), but the majority of students (9 students) believed it was still their *own decision* first and foremost but that they were supported and encouraged by their *parents*. Five students were just ‘sent away’ by their parents with no say in the decision. *Friends or schoolmates* also featured as an influence (4 students), including those who had studied overseas and returned to share their experiences, or those who were still overseas but remained in contact. *Education agent* was cited by 2 students as an influencer, but was used as a consultant as to which the best destination for the student after the decision to leave home was already made.

#### **4.3 Pull factors for New Zealand**

Students were asked why they chose New Zealand as their study destination. New Zealand’s *clean green* reputation of *beautiful nature and a good climate*, was cited as one of the biggest reasons to come here (9 students), closely followed by the perception that it is a *safe* country (5 students). The *quality of the education system* was also brought up as a major drawcard (4 students). These students had the perception that a New Zealand high school education would *improve* their chances of gaining *entry to their tertiary institution* of choice either in their home country, in New Zealand or in another English speaking country. They also believed that this ability to study in English would *improve* their *job prospects* in their home country, in New Zealand or in another overseas destination. New Zealand’s small population also adds to the perception that it is a peaceful and quiet destination (2 students).

One student in particular mentioned that ‘my parents thought I would be less likely to get into trouble here’. Along with the perception that New Zealand has a small population came the comments that there were *less international students studying here* (2 students). Two students mentioned a *family connection* to New Zealand, either having a parent who had travelled here or studied here before or having family or close family friends living here already.

Students were asked what they enjoy about studying at high school in New Zealand. The *wide range of fun and interesting subjects* (8 students) as well as being able to *choose your own subjects* (4 students) came up with nearly all the respondents. *Internal assessment* also featured as a major drawcard (3 students). *The friendly teacher-student relationship* was also mentioned as something positive by two students, both from Asia. *Short school hours and long breaks* also came up as a positive aspect of the New Zealand education system for two students. *Making friends* with New Zealand students (1 student), *sports and arts* opportunities (1 student) as well as *studying in English* (1 student) also came up as areas students enjoyed about New Zealand school life.

#### ***4.3.1 Motivations to stay and continue onto tertiary education in New Zealand***

New Zealand’s lifestyle and relaxed social environment was the biggest motivator to stay for the students surveyed. *Great lifestyle* (4 students), increased opportunities for *sports and arts* (2 students) and *friendly people* (3 students) were three major reasons to want to stay on. This was followed by the academic environment as a reason for transitioning onto tertiary studies in New Zealand. Four students perceived there to be *better study opportunities* and a *higher quality of education* here than in their home country and *good study environment for international students* featured strongly in three students’ motivations. Two students said, that in New Zealand, universities students are *less competitive* than at home, allowing a greater chance for success. Two students felt that having studied *NCEA* in New Zealand was *an advantage to getting into university or polytechnic* here. Other areas which came up as motivations to stay by individual students were: gaining *New Zealand residency*, the ability to *work part time* whilst studying, that *the study fees were cheaper* here than in other overseas destinations, that their *Christian faith* was more accepted in New Zealand and to *avoid military*

*service* in their home country.

#### **4.4 Push Factors from New Zealand**

Students were asked what they don't like about *living* in New Zealand. The biggest challenge for students living in New Zealand are the *strict rules for international students* (6 students). An *inadequate public transport system* (4 students) and *short retail trading hours* (3 students) were also brought up as unfavourable elements of New Zealand society. *Western culture* (2 students), including food (2 students) and *living with a host family* (3 students) and following their rules, were also cited as being challenging. This contributed to *homesickness* and *missing their biological parents* (2 students). *Racism* was brought up as an issue by two students, especially prejudicial thinking towards Asian students. *Difficulty in making kiwi friends* was also mentioned by two students.

From a school perspective, the biggest difficulty facing international students studying in New Zealand is that *teachers are not always able or prepared to extend extra help* or explanations to them in class (7 students). *Studying in English* was cited as challenging by three students. Three students also mentioned that New Zealand students have a negative attitude to international students which affected their school experience. Three students also commented that *New Zealand students are lazy* compared to how hard students work overseas. Only one student *found it difficult to make New Zealand friends*, and one mentioned the *cost of studying in New Zealand versus home*, although she did clarify that it is still cheaper than other overseas study destinations. Two students noted that *if students choose the wrong subjects* it can *limit their study options* after high school.

#### **4.5 Pull factors to their home country**

*Personal and human factors* formed the bulk of the motivation to return home. *Family* was undoubtedly the biggest pull factor to return home (9 students). Students miss the support and deeper level of communication they can have with their natural family. *Food* was another main element students missed from home (6 students), "like back home we have rice every night and here we just have potatoes" one student lamented. Two students were just happy to be *back in a familiar culture*. *Friends* (4 students) and *social life* (3 students) featured very highly as well. This included two students who would be happy to be *free of the school rules* (2

students).

Only two students mentioned *the cheaper cost of studying at home*. Two mentioned the *education system is better at home* and two mentioned *better job opportunities with a degree from home*, but by far most reasons to return home were *personal* rather than *academic or financial*.

With regards to completing their studies at home, three students intended to *continue their studies in New Zealand* and five believed they needed to *study at home to find a job at home* as *New Zealand qualifications were not recognised by employers or universities*. For three, cost was a factor, it is *cheaper to study at home* (and free in some cases). *Family support*, while studying at home, was also listed as a positive factor. Only one student mentioned *studying in their native language* to be a drawcard.

## **Chapter 5: Findings – Online survey**

In the previous chapter, I presented findings from the focus group. The online questionnaire was developed based on results of the focus groups. The findings from the focus group interviews highlighted what some of the main motivating factors were around student decision making. Many of these were very academically focused such as a wide range of subjects being available in New Zealand schools and the ability to study in English. Some were practical considerations, such as cost and the study environment whereas others were based on individual perceptions, such as the beauty of New Zealand's natural environment and lifestyle. Other motivations were deeply personal, such as future career aspirations and personal relationships. On the basis of these the survey questions were formulated.

In this chapter, I report on the results of the survey. Qualitative analysis of the focus groups is followed by the quantitative analysis of the online survey findings and discussed as a whole in the next chapter.

The analysis of the survey was to focus on the motivating factors of students for choosing New Zealand as their overseas study destination, what their perceptions are of the New Zealand tertiary education system, and what motivated them or would motivate them to continue their tertiary studies in New Zealand.

### **5.1 Demographic of students**

The results are summarised in Table 2. A total of 158 students attempted the survey. Of these there were 132 complete or 80-90% complete responses, all of which were used in the data analysis. Of the 132 respondents, 38% of the students were male and 62% were female. Twenty-six responses were incomplete to a point of not yielding useful results, three of these were partial completions which appeared in overall counts in some questions, the remaining 23 were not used in the analysis.

The majority (78%) of respondents were from the Bay of Plenty and 22% were from the Waikato. A split was done by geographical region to ascertain if responses were markedly different across all questions. Where there were notable trends by region, such as future study intentions, these were analysed separately and are noted under each heading.

Half of all respondents (50%) were aged 16 and the other half were 17 years and over. Of the latter, 28% were 17 years old, 20% were 18 years old and just two respondents (1.5%) were aged 19 and over.

Almost two thirds (64%) of respondents had been in New Zealand under one year, and just over a third had been in New Zealand more than one year (36%). As the survey was conducted during Term 1 of the 2016 school year, 26% of students identified as ‘just arrived at this school’ and 38% had been in New Zealand for less than a year, 16% of students had been in New Zealand between 1-2 years, 15% from 2-3 years, and 3% from 3-4 years. Only one respondent had been in New Zealand 4-5 years, and one respondent 5 years and over.

As can be seen in Table 2, the highest single group of respondents were from Germany (28%), followed by Japan (15%) and China (12%). Other major groups were students from Korea (10%) and Thailand (8%). Broken down into geographical regions (taking into account the countries mentioned under ‘other’) 50% of students identified as coming from Asia, 39% from Europe, 7% from South America and other regions 3%. All but 2 of the 37 German respondents studied in the Bay of Plenty, and the majority of mainland Chinese respondents (10) were studying in Waikato and 6 students were from Bay of Plenty.

**Table 2: Country of origin: Survey respondents (n=132)**

<b>Asian</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>%</b>
China	16	12
Hong Kong	3	2
Taiwan	2	1.5
Japan	20	15
Korea	13	10
Thailand	11	8
Vietnam	2	1.5
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>50</b>

<b>European</b>		
Germany	37	28
Italy	2	1.5
Austria	4	3
France	3	2
Netherlands	1	0.75
Norway	1	0.75
Switzerland	4	3
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>South America</b>		
Brazil	7	5.5
Chile	2	1.5
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Other</b>		
India	1	0.75
Sri Lanka	1	0.75
Papua New Guinea	1	0.75
Fiji	1	0.75
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>100</b>

### 5.3 Reasons for coming to New Zealand initially

The statements about reasons for coming to New Zealand are broken down into four broad categories: Academic motivations, Financial & professional motivations, Physical environment, and Personal / Human motivations. Included in these categories are the responses to the question: *How do you think studying in New Zealand will help your future?* This related to both future study plans and employment prospects. Results are summarised in Table 3.

### **5.3.1 Academic motivations**

As can be seen in Table 3, the vast majority, 120 students (90%), agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they came to New Zealand to *improve their English*. In the comments section of the question, 16 respondents mentioned this as an important motivating factor.

The next biggest drawcard for students to come to New Zealand was the *wide range of subjects available* in the New Zealand education system, with 105 (79%) students citing this as a key reason for choosing New Zealand as their study destination. Only 8 (6%) students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

When asked why they chose New Zealand, 23% of respondents (30) said that they came to New Zealand because there were *not too many international students*. However 53% of students (70) believed this is not the case. With the remaining quarter giving a neutral response.

Furthermore, 45% (60) of respondents thought that *the education system in New Zealand is better than in their home country* while 26% (33) thought that this is not the case and 27% (36) of respondents had a neutral response. Of the students who agreed or strongly agreed with this statement 5% (7) were from the Asia/Pacific. In contrast, 57% of the European students (76) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Asked whether they were *dissatisfied with the education system in their home country*, 26% (35) of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 35% (49) were neutral and 39% (52) answered in the negative, indicating they were happy with the education system in their home country. Only 17 students (13%) cited the fact that they were *failing in the education system back home* as a reason for coming to New Zealand, whereas 70% (93 students) claimed that this was not the case in their situation. Four respondents (5%) mentioned *experiencing another school system* as a reason to come to New Zealand in the comments section.

Respondents indicated that having studied in an English-speaking country will help with their future study plans, with respect to whether they should return home, pursue another overseas study destination, or remain in New Zealand. Their

responses can be broken down into the following categories: *Universities/Polytechnics back HOME like their students to have studied in an English speaking country* was chosen by 66 (50%) of all respondents, with 42 students (31%) indicating a neutral response and 9% (12 students) showing disagreement. An even larger tally of 75 students (57%) chose the option that having studied in an English speaking country is looked on favorably by *universities and polytechnics in other countries they wish to study in*, with only 7% (10 students) disagreeing to some extent with this statement. Similarly 53 students (40%) agreed that this is *beneficial for continuing their studies in New Zealand*, with 58 students (44%) giving a neutral response and 21 students (16%) a negative response. *The high quality qualifications* in New Zealand was brought up by five respondents (7%) in the comments section as being helpful for their academic futures.

### ***5.3.2 Financial & professional motivations***

The majority of students believe that gaining their qualifications from an English speaking country would be looked on favourably by *employers* in their home country, in other overseas destinations and in New Zealand. When students were asked if *studying in New Zealand would assist their future job prospects at home*, 56% (75 students) indicated this to be the case with only 8% (10 students) saying this is not so. An even larger proportion (65% or 86 students) thought that *employers in other countries that they'd like to work in* would look favourably on qualifications gained in New Zealand and 9% (12) disagreed and 49 students (37%) thought that *employers in New Zealand would prefer New Zealand gained qualifications*, with 46% (61) unsure and 17% (22) disagreeing with the statement.

*Improving English for future job opportunities* was the biggest drawcard for students choosing to study overseas. 45 students (34%) brought this up unprompted as a very important factor in the additional comments section to this question. Meeting New Zealanders and other foreign nationals was also cited by five students as an advantage for the future as the business world becomes more globalised. Other reasons for coming to New Zealand included four students citing improved future work possibilities overseas or at home, while two mentioned the fact that New Zealand was cheaper than other English-speaking destinations to be a major factor.

#### **5.3.4 Physical environment**

The perception that New Zealand is *clean and beautiful* is a factor identified by 119 students (89%), with 75 students 56% strongly agreeing and 44 students (34%) agreeing with the statement. *Beautiful nature and clean environment* were brought up by an additional 18 respondents (14%) unprompted in the comments section.

Over 80% (109) of students perceive New Zealand to be a *safe country*, with 41% (55) students agreeing and 54 students (40%) strongly agreeing with the statement. *New Zealand's favourable climate* was brought up by five respondents in the comments section.

#### **5.3.5 Personal & human motivations**

Asked if New Zealand was *recommended as a good place to study*, 85 students (64%) said that this was the case, 37% (49) agreed and 27% (36) strongly agreed with the statement, with only nine students answering in the negative (7%).

It was the personal and human motivations that featured strongly in the comments section of the survey. The biggest personal motivator was to *develop as a person and have new experiences*; 23 students (17%) gave this as a main reason to come. To *experience another culture* was cited by 22 students (16%) in the comments section of this question as a reason to choose New Zealand. Four students mentioned understanding a new culture would help them in the future as well. *To meet new or friendly people* was also a comment brought up by 19 respondents (14%) and 18 students (13%) mentioned *sport and outdoor adventure activities* as a key motivator in choosing New Zealand. These included, rugby, surfing, surfing and adventure sports as reasons to come. Four respondents mentioned friends and family a motivating factor to choose New Zealand.

When asked to provide an insight into how students feel that *studying in New Zealand can help their future*, personal and human motivations featured strongly. *The ability to adapt to new systems and situations* was raised as an important benefit by nine (7%) of students, as was *experiencing a new world view*, which was also mentioned by nine students (7%). The biggest personal benefit was *personal growth*, (confidence and independence), noted by 12 students (9%).

#### **Table 3: Reasons for coming to New Zealand initially**

<b>Academic Motivations:</b>	<b>Raw Count</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
To improve my English	120	90
Wide range of subjects available	105	79
Unis/Polytechnics in <i>other countries</i> like students to have studied in an English-speaking country	75	57
Unis/Polys <i>back home</i> like students to have studied in an English speaking country	66	50
The education system in NZ is better than back home	60	45
NZ Unis/Polytechnics like students to have NCEA	53	40
Dissatisfied with the education system back home	35	26
There are not too many international students in NZ	30	23
Failing in the education system back home	17	13
High quality qualifications in NZ (unprompted)	5	7
To experience another school system (unprompted)	4	5
<b>Financial and professional motivations:</b>		
Quals. from an English speaking country will improve job prospects in other <i>overseas destinations</i>	86	65
Qualifications from an English speaking country will improve job prospects <i>at home</i>	75	56
Employers in NZ prefer NZ qualifications	49	37
Improved English will improve job prospects in general (unprompted responses)	45	34
Meeting New Zealanders and other foreign nationals (unprompted)	5	7
NZ is cheaper than other international study destinations (unprompted)	2	3

<b>Physical Environment:</b>		
New Zealand is clean and beautiful	119	89
New Zealand is a safe country	109	80
Beautiful nature and clean environment (unprompted response)	18	14
Great climate (unprompted)	5	7
<b>Personal &amp; Human motivations:</b>		
Recommended as a good place to study	85	64
To develop as a person and have new experiences (Unprompted response)	23	17
Exposure to another culture (Unprompted)	22	16
To meet new or friendly people (unprompted)	19	14
Sports and other outdoor adventure activities (unprompted)	18	13

### ***5.3.6 People influencing students' decisions to come to study in New Zealand***

When asked how much influence (or help) each of the persons listed had on their decision to study in New Zealand, the respondents identified:

- 1) Students themselves (75%)<sup>1</sup>
- 2) Parent or parents (50%)
- 3) Friends or schoolmates (36%)
- 4) Agent in home country (29%)
- 5) NZ International manager (26%)
- 6) Teacher(s) in home country (17%)

Of the students who listed their *parents* as the biggest influence, 25% (33) were from the Asia/Pacific region versus 4% (6) from Europe. Of the European students surveyed, 37 (77%) listed *myself* as having *the biggest influence* on their decision to study abroad versus 20 (31%) Asian students. Asian students were also more likely to be influenced by an *agent* in their home country. A total of 25 students or 39 % of Asian students cited their *agent* as having *a lot of influence* or *the biggest*

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<sup>1</sup> The percentages represent a sum of *a lot of influence* and *the biggest influence of all*.

*influence* versus just 6% of Europeans (3 students). Although the number of respondents was small, six out of seven Brazilian students also cited their *agent at home* as having *a lot* or *the biggest* influence on their decision to study in New Zealand. *International managers from New Zealand* had the most impact on Asian students with 37% (24 students) listing their *International Manager* as having *a lot* or *the biggest* influence on their decision to study abroad. The Table 4 summarizes students' answers represented as percentages from 133 respondents who answered the question.

**Table 4: Influence each person(s) had on the student decisions to study in New Zealand (n= 133)**

<b>Level of influence in percentages</b>	<b>Myself</b>	<b>Parent</b>	<b>Friend</b>	<b>Intl. Agent</b>	<b>NZ Intl. Manager</b>	<b>Teacher at home</b>
No influence at all	0.8	2.5	23.1	28.1	40.5	41.3
Very little influence	5.0	9.9	14.9	12.4	11.6	14.9
Some influence	19.0	37.2	25.6	30.6	22.3	26.4
A lot of influence	22.3	31.4	28.9	16.5	17.4	14.9
The biggest influence	52.9	19.0	7.4	12.4	8.3	2.5
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100	100	100

#### 5.4: Future intentions

Students were asked to state their future intentions after finishing their high school studies in New Zealand. See figure 1 at the end of this section for a visual snapshot of the total responses.

**Table 5: Student plans after leaving their New Zealand high school**

	<b>Total Count</b>	<b>Percent %</b>	<b>BOP Count</b>	<b>Percent %</b>	<b>WKTO Count</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Stay in NZ to study at University / Polytechnic	22	18	9	10	13	50
Return home to study at Uni / Poly	48	40	45	48	3	12
Go to another country to study	17	14	12	13	5	19
Go back to finish school in my home country	16	13	15	16	1	4
Go straight into work	0	0	0	0	0	0
I don't know yet	17	14	13	14	4	15
<b>Total:</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100</b>

As can be seen in Table 5 the majority of students have the intention of returning to their home countries when they finish their studies in New Zealand high schools. Of the students surveyed, 40% intended to return to University or Polytechnic at home, and a further 13% plan to finish high school back home. Thus, about half (53%) of students were intending to return to their home countries to study at some

level. Of those who were returning to high school at home, two students mentioned that they intend to come back to New Zealand to go to university.

A total of 22 students (18%) indicated they intended to stay in New Zealand to go to University or Polytechnic. A further 17 students (14%) planned to go to another overseas country to continue their education. An equal number (17) indicated they did not know what they would do after high school in New Zealand. No respondents indicated that they planned to join the work force immediately after finishing high school.

A regional difference here is notable. Of the 26 students who study in the Waikato, 13 (50%) intend to continue their tertiary education in New Zealand versus three (12%) who intend to return home. In the Bay of Plenty, this trend is reversed with only nine students out of 94 (10%) intending to stay in New Zealand to continue their tertiary studies versus 45 (48%) who intend to return home to attend University or Polytechnic.

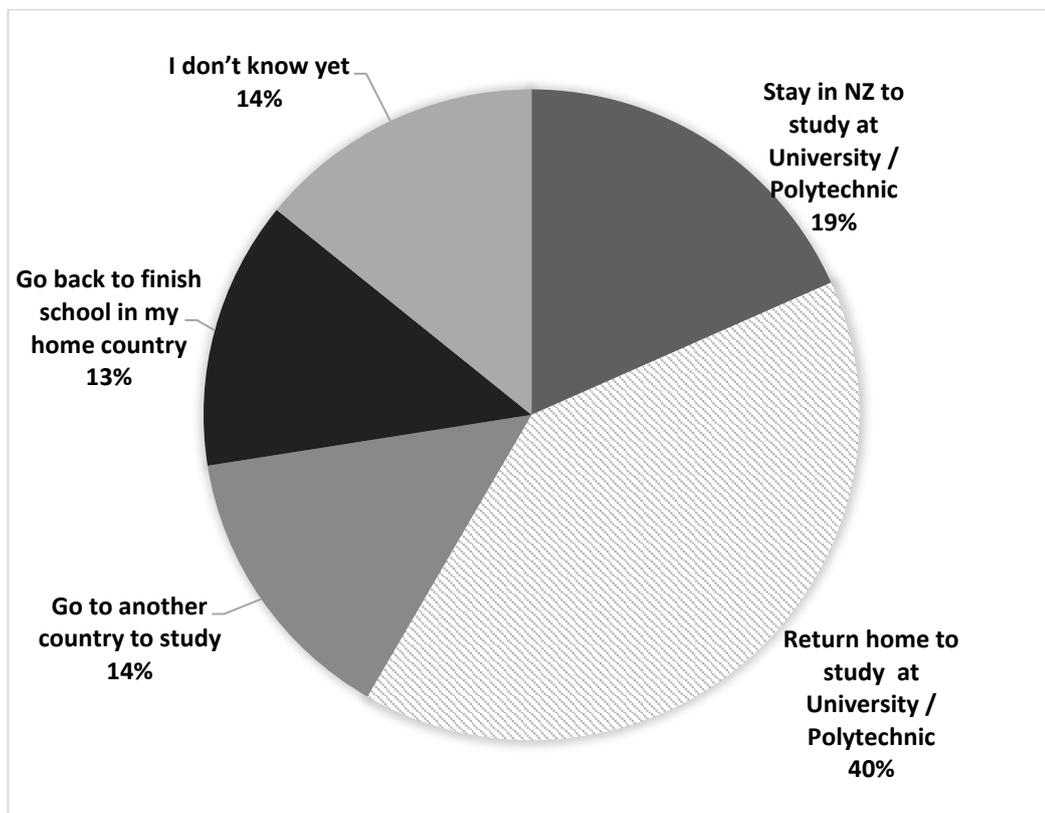
Broken down according to regions or national origin, very few European students intended to continue their tertiary studies in New Zealand – only 3% of European students versus 34% of students from the Asian/Pacific region, and a further 78% of European students intended to *return home to start their tertiary studies* versus only 30% of Asian students. Asian students were also more likely to *continue their studies at another overseas destination* (24%) when compared to 3% of Europeans.

#### ***5.4.1 When future study decisions were made***

When students were asked when the decision relating to future study plans was made of the 87 students who identified their future intentions, 65 students (75%) made this decision *before* they left their home country and 22 (25%) students made this decision *after* they arrived in New Zealand.

Broken down according to regions or national origin, the vast majority (89%) of European students who had made the decision to *return home* to complete their tertiary studies did so *before* coming to New Zealand. Similarly, of the Asian students intending to return home to study, 72% made this decision *before* leaving home. Of the remaining Asian students, those who had made their decision to

*continue their studies in New Zealand* did so *before* arriving here. This means that 38% of these students made that decision *whilst studying at high school* in New Zealand. Of those Asian students who intended to *go to another country to continue their tertiary studies*, two thirds (66%) made this decision *before* coming to New Zealand and a third (33%) made this decision *whilst studying at high school* in New Zealand. These results have a potentially important ramifications for influencing students' choices of future study destinations, something that will be discussed in detail in the following section.

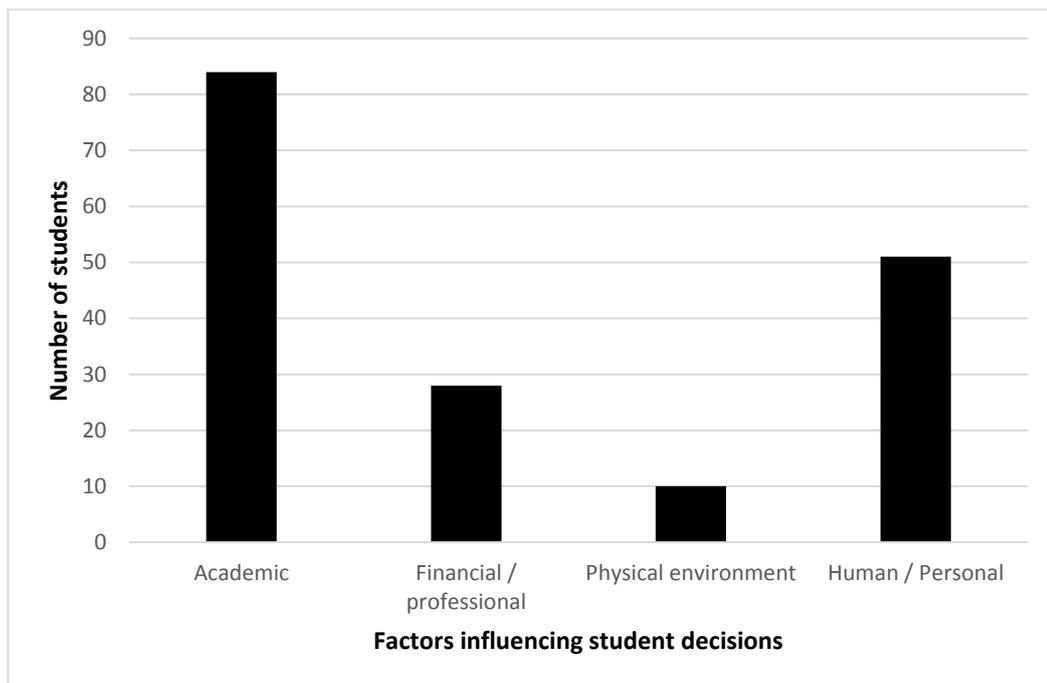


**Figure 1: Student plans after high school in New Zealand.**

#### **5.4.2 Motivations for student decision-making**

The results from the students who had a clear idea about their future study plans were analysed and broken down into the same four categories as “reasons to come to New Zealand”. Students could list multiple factors that are important in their decision-making. As can be seen in Figure 2, the results reveal that 84 (48%) students cited *academic motivations* as an important factor in their decision making; 28 (16%) students cited *financial and professional motivations*, 10 students (6%)

cited the physical environment as a factor in their decision (Note: only those students choosing to continue their studies in New Zealand listed this as a factor), and 51 students (29%), cited human or personal motivations as factors in making a decision about their future study plans.



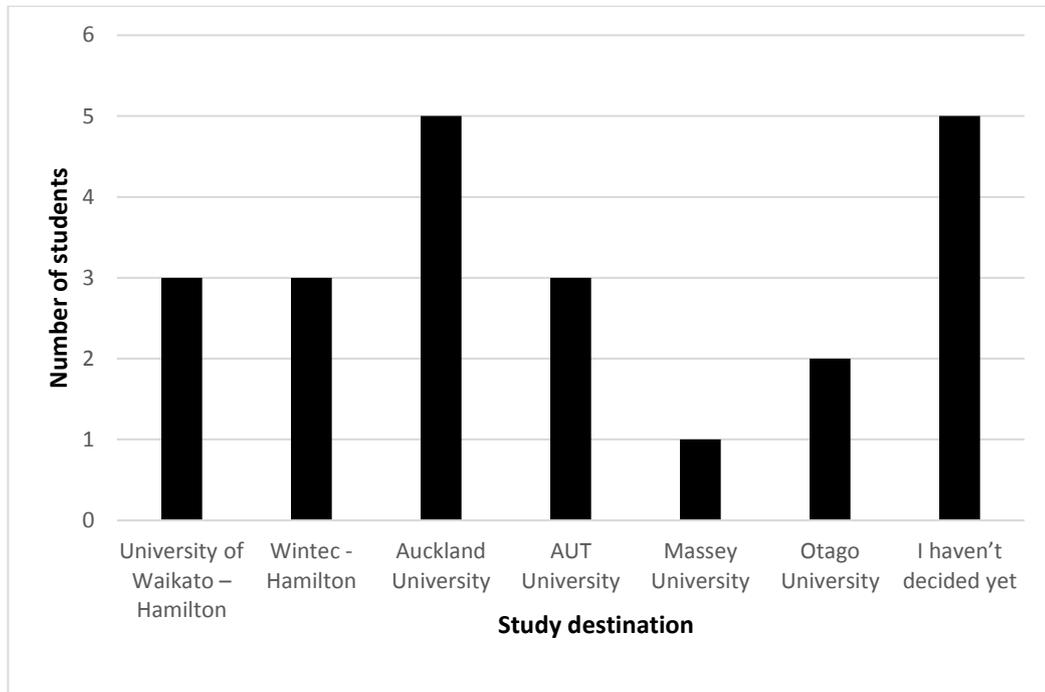
**Figure 2: Motivating factors in student decision-making re future plans**

#### **5.4.3 Students planning to stay in New Zealand to study at University or Polytechnic**

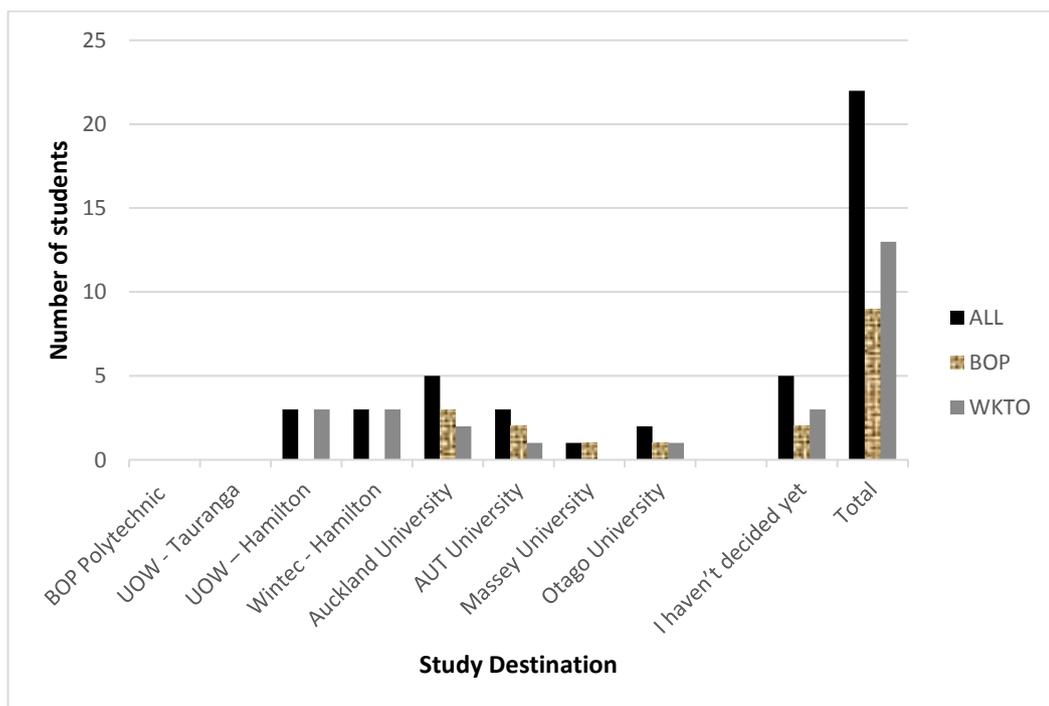
Respondents were asked to provide more information about their future plans. Of the 104 students who responded, 22 intend to stay in New Zealand; of these, 14 (64%) indicated that they had already made this decision *before* they came to New Zealand, while eight (36%) students said they made this decision *after* they arrived in New Zealand.

As can be seen in Figure 3, of the 22 respondents who intend to stay in New Zealand, five intended to go to Auckland University, three planned to attend Waikato University, Hamilton campus, three planned to go to WINTEC Hamilton, three to AUT University in Auckland, two planned to go to Otago University and one student to Massey University. Five students were undecided about where they would like to study in New Zealand. No students indicated that they planned to

study at Bay of Plenty Polytechnic or the University of Waikato, Tauranga campus. No Bay of Plenty students intended to go to the Waikato University either, but to universities further afield. Of the 26 respondents from the Waikato, 13 planned to stay in New Zealand to continue their studies, six of whom planned to attend either WINTEC or Waikato University, and seven planned to leave the region.



**Figure 3: Study destinations re student plans to continue study in New Zealand**

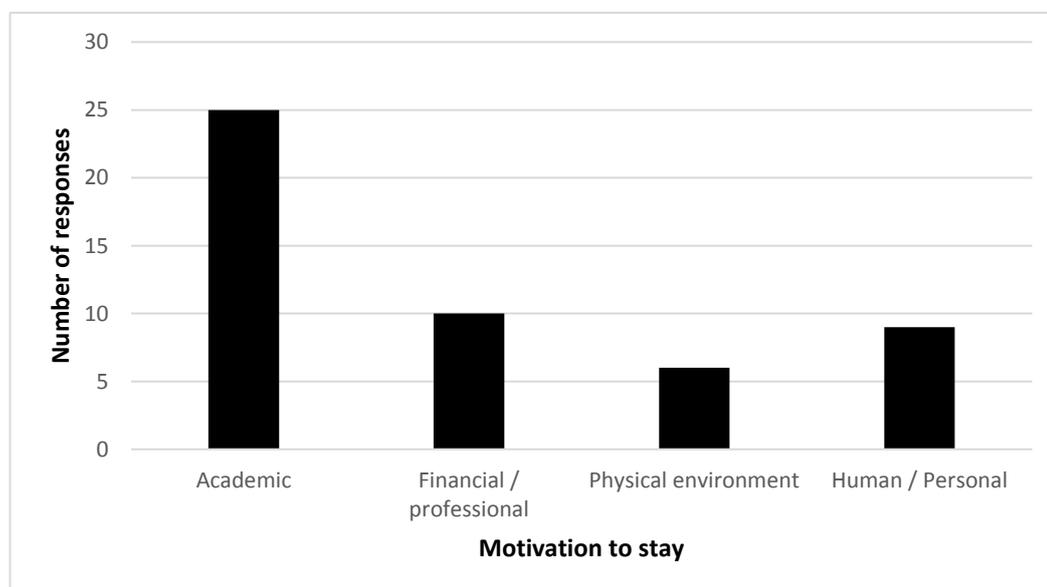


**Figure 4: Student study destinations by region**

#### **5.4.4 Main motivators to stay in New Zealand**

Students were also asked for the three main reasons that would make them stay in New Zealand. These were analysed and broken down into the same four categories as reasons to come to New Zealand initially: academic motivations, professional and financial motivations, physical environment and personal and human motivations.

Of the 25 factors students who listed *academic motivations* as important in their decision-making included: Good education system (7 responses), developing English skills (6 responses), more tertiary study opportunities (6), and relaxed study environment (6). *Financial and professional motivations* they further identified: Wanting to live and work here (4) and improving future work opportunities overseas (2). *Physical environment*: A good, clean natural environment was raised by seven respondents, and opportunities to engage in sports and arts by three respondents. *Human / personal motivations* raised by students were: having friends or family here (5), personal development (2), having a good health system (1), and multiculturalism (1).



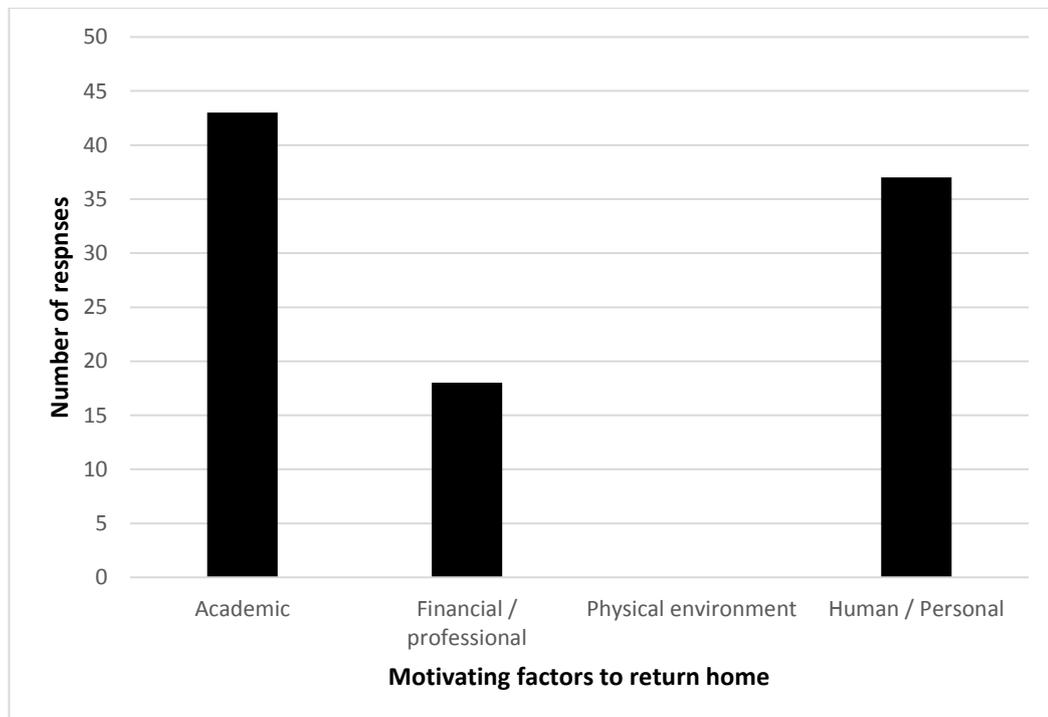
**Figure 5: Student motivations to begin their tertiary study in New Zealand**

#### **5.4.5 Student planning to return home to study at University or Polytechnic**

A total of 48 students intended to return home to study after their schooling in New

Zealand. Of these, 40 students (83%) had made this decision *before* they arrived at high school in New Zealand. Only eight students (19%), made this decision *after* they arrived in New Zealand.

When asked to state the three main reasons to return home students responses were categorised into the same four categories as before: *Academic motivations* included: Education system better than in New Zealand (15 responses), more tertiary study opportunities (8), eight students also indicated they need to finish high school at home (Not including the 16 students who indicated this as an ‘other option’ for what they intended to do after finishing high school in New Zealand). A number of other themes also emerged from the open questions, such as that six students wanted to study in their own language, four felt they needed to attend a university at home, and two mentioned they could not get into university at home with NCEA from high school in New Zealand. *Financial and professional motivations* included: 10 students thought returning home would improve their future work opportunities, eight mentioned education is cheap or free at home. *Physical environment*: no students mentioned the physical environment at home as a reason to return. *Human / personal motivations* raised by students were: returning to a familiar culture (19) and to revisit friends or family (18).



**Figure 6: Student motivations to return home after high school in New Zealand**

#### 5.4.6 Students who are unsure of their future pathways

The pattern on responses from 17 students (14%) who were still unsure of what their plans were after finishing their high school in New Zealand can be seen in Table 6. They had the opportunity to indicate from a list and add comments with respect to what factors could motivate them to stay on in New Zealand to continue their studies. The three most frequently chosen factors were: If someone would help me decide *what* to study, if there was good *academic support* available for international students, and if the study *fees* were lower than what they are now.

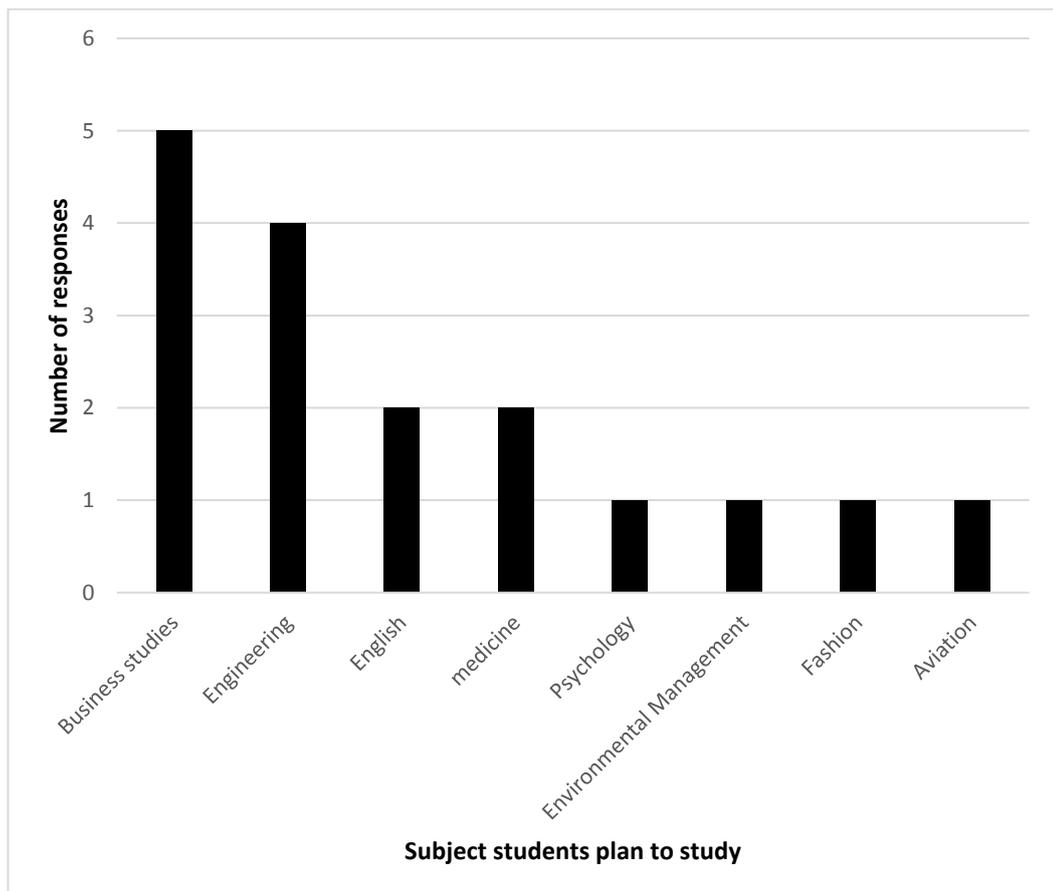
**Table 6: Motivating factors for undecided students to stay in New Zealand to study**

<b>Motivating factors:</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
If the right <i>diploma/degree</i> was available to me	6
If someone would help me decide on <i>what</i> to study	9
If someone from the University or Polytechnic would come and explain the <i>study options</i> to me	7
If there was good <i>accommodation</i> for international students	4
If the study <i>fees</i> were lower than what they are now	8
If there were <i>scholarships</i> available to international students	7
If there was good <i>academic support</i> for international students	9
If there was good <i>personal support</i> for international students	5
If I knew the NZ qualification would give me a high chance of <i>employment</i> in NZ	2
If I knew the NZ qualification would give me a high chance of <i>employment at home</i>	5
If I knew the NZ qualification would give me a high chance of <i>employment in another country</i>	6
If I knew the NZ qualification would give me a high chance of getting NZ <i>residency</i>	3
If the University or Polytechnic had a <i>good international reputation</i>	4
<i>None</i> of these things would motivate me to stay in NZ to continue my studies	3

#### **5.4.7 Students planning to go to another country to study at University or Polytechnic**

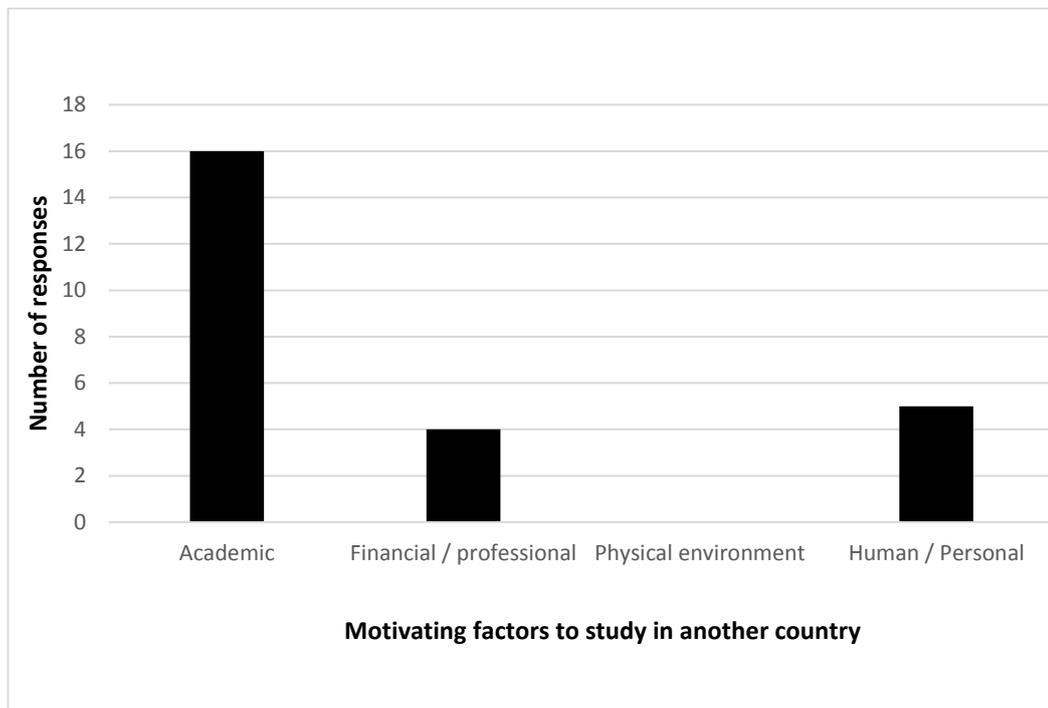
Of the 17 students planning to head offshore for their tertiary education, a majority of students, 11 (64%), decided to go to another country to complete their studies *before* they arrived at high school in New Zealand and six students (35%), made this decision *after* they arrived in New Zealand. Of these 17 students, five intended to head to the USA, three planned to go to Canada, followed by Australia and the UK with two each, one is going to Germany, one to Korea and two have not decided on their destination yet.

As can be seen in Figure 7, students intended to study at overseas destinations; business studies / media / marketing (5), engineering (4), English (2), medicine / health (2), and fashion, psychology, environmental management, and aviation (one student in each of these subjects).



**Figure 7: What students are planning to study overseas**

As summarised in Figure 8, of the 17 respondents who planned to head to another overseas study destination, the primary motivations were *Academic motivations*. These included: The education system better than in New Zealand (5), the qualifications are more respected in my home country (4), the qualifications are more respected internationally (5), the qualification they want to study is not available in New Zealand (2). *Financial and professional motivations* included factors such as: It is cheaper to live than New Zealand (2), it has cheaper study fees than New Zealand (1), and it would improve their future work opportunities (1). *Physical environment*: No students mentioned the physical environment at in this country as a reason to leave New Zealand. *Human / personal motivations* raised by students were: it is a better place to live than New Zealand (2), and a general desire to visit that country (3).



**Figure 8: Motivations to study in another country after high school in New Zealand**

## 5.5 Perceptions of international students of tertiary education in New Zealand

The whole group of 135 respondents (regardless of whether they had indicated they wished to stay, go overseas, or return home) was asked about their views on New Zealand tertiary education in general. The respondents were asked to tick as many boxes as they wished to express statements they agreed with. Many students refrained from ticking any boxes which in itself is a result indicating that students did not know a lot about tertiary providers, as confirmed in the comments section where 10 students took the time to point out that they knew very little about tertiary education in New Zealand and so refrained from expressing their opinion.

The statement which attracted the most agreement was *there is a wider range of subjects available than back home*– was chosen by 46 students (34%) of whom 26 (50%) were European while the other half were Asian respondents. The statement which attracted the least number of responses was *I would consider getting my degree through a Polytechnic* which only nine (7%) chose– none of these were from Europe; *I would only want my degree to be from a university* was chosen by 26 (19%) of students. As can be seen in Table 7, the statements that respondents choose were academic motivations: *It is better quality education in New Zealand than back home*, 34 students chose this option (25%). Of these 34 responses, 25 were Asian students. The other responses included *It is easy to get into New Zealand Universities / Polytechnics with NCEA from New Zealand high schools*, 35 (26%) responses; and *New Zealand offers a good study environment for international students*, 41 (30%) responses. This last option was a popular perception of European students with 40% (21) of European students selecting this option versus only 25% (18) of Asian students.

**Table 7: Perceptions of international students on tertiary education in New Zealand**

<b>Perceptions of international students on tertiary education in NZ</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%</b>
There is a <i>wider range of subjects</i> available than back home	46	34
NZ offers a <i>good study environment</i> for international students	41	30
It is <i>easy to get into</i> NZ Universities / Polytechnics with NCEA from NZ high schools	35	26
It is <i>better quality education</i> in NZ than back home	34	25
It is <i>cheaper</i> to study in New Zealand than in other countries	22	16
I would only want my <i>degree</i> to be from a <i>university</i>	26	19
NZ qualifications are respected by <i>employers internationally</i>	20	15
NZ qualifications are respected by <i>employers in my home country</i>	19	14
I don't know about tertiary education in NZ (Noted from comments section)	10	7
I would consider getting my <i>degree</i> though a <i>polytechnic</i>	9	7

### **5.6 Students' perceptions of studying at tertiary providers in their home countries**

When asked about studying at tertiary providers in their home countries 43% (58) of students said that being able to study in their native language was the biggest academic motivation for students. This was followed closely by a more personal motivator of being able to study with the support of family which was chosen by 38% (51) of students. Cost also featured high on the list of motivators to return home to study with 42 responses (31%). Also, 30% (40) of students felt it would be easier to study in a familiar culture, and 24% (33) felt that the education back home was of a better quality than it is in New Zealand. A further 23% (31) felt they could get a better job with a qualification from back home and 16% (22) felt NCEA would not be accepted as an entry qualification by tertiary institutions at home.

**Table 8: Student perceptions of studying at tertiary providers in their home countries**

<b>Students' perceptions of studying at tertiary providers in their home countries</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%</b>
It is easier to study in my native language	58	43
It is easier to study with support of family	51	38
It is cheaper than studying in New Zealand	42	31
It is easier to study in a familiar culture	40	30
It is better quality education than in New Zealand	33	24
There are better job opportunities with a qualification from home	31	23
Tertiary institutions back home don't accept NCEA as an entry criteria	22	16

### **5.7 Factors that could attract students to stay to complete their tertiary education in New Zealand**

The whole cohort of 135 students were also asked what factors could attract them to stay in New Zealand to continue their tertiary studies, regardless of whether they intend to stay or not. Academic motivators dominated the responses. The option that good results could be achieved due to the lack of competition was the most frequent of the responses, chosen by 27 (21%) students. This was followed closely by students' confidence in their English ability: *studying in English is not a problem for me* attracted 32 (24%) responses. This rang particularly true for European students, 39% (20) of them chose this option, versus 14% (10) of Asian students. Being used to the New Zealand study style was chosen by 18% (24) of respondents choosing this option. Personal drivers such as gaining New Zealand residency was also a popular choice at 15% (20 students), closely followed by the friendships students had forged in New Zealand chosen by 18 students (13%). Having family members in New Zealand and avoiding military service back home both featured weakly as student motivators with 5% (7) and 3% (4) respectively. However, almost a third of respondents, 42 students (31%), could not identify with any of the listed reasons as motivations to stay in New Zealand to study at tertiary level.

**Table 9: Attractive factors for students to stay to complete their tertiary education in New Zealand**

<b>Studying at Polytechnic or University in New Zealand is attractive to me because:</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%</b>
I can achieve good results as there is less competition than back home	37	27
Studying in English is no problem for me	32	24
I'm already used to the New Zealand Study style	24	18
To gain New Zealand residency	20	15
My friends are here	18	13
My family members are here	7	5
To avoid military service back home	4	3
None of these reasons apply to me	42	31

### **5.8 Satisfaction of students with their study experience in New Zealand**

As a means of gauging whether students are satisfied with their study experience in New Zealand they were asked: *How happy are you with your student life in New Zealand so far?* Of the 119 students who replied, 86% (102) were either happy or very happy with their student life in New Zealand; 9% (11) were neither happy nor unhappy, and only 5% (6) were either not happy or not happy at all.

Looking at these results by region, it appears that there is a greater level of happiness amongst students in the Bay of Plenty than in the Waikato – in the Bay of Plenty 90% (84) students were happy or very happy compared to 72% (18) of Waikato students. There were seven students in the Bay of Plenty and four students in the Waikato that selected a neutral answer. In each region, the Bay of Plenty and the Waikato, there were three students who were either not happy or not happy at all.

**Table 10: Levels of student happiness by region (n =119)**

<b>Level of satisfaction</b>	<b>Bay of Plenty %</b>	<b>Waikato%</b>	<b>Total %</b>
I am not happy at all	2	8	3
I am not happy	1	4	2
I am neither happy or unhappy	7	16	9
I am happy	50	40	47
I am very happy	40	32	39
Total	100	100	100

### **5.8.1 Factors contributing to students' happiness /unhappiness**

When asked if they had any additional comments that they wanted to share regarding their New Zealand study experience, many students took the opportunity to share their thoughts. Students commented on how satisfied they were on a number of different levels, ranging from the education system, to the New Zealand lifestyle, for example:

After being in New Zealand for seven months I can say that I am so glad that I got this opportunity to come to New Zealand. Although I don't really like the school system here, school is still really important to make friends and learn the language. I think to make friends and have a good host family is really important to make your year the best year of your life.

The answers were analysed and coded into themes which were then categorised under the four areas of motivations: Academic, Financial/Professional, Physical environment and Personal / Human, with push and pull factors noted under each heading.

**Academic motivations:** Pull factors: Out of 16 students who mentioned academic motivations, having a *Good school / Education system* was mentioned by eight respondents. *Improving in English* by six respondents and having *interesting subjects at school* by two respondents. From a negative perspective, push factors,

six respondents commented that school in New Zealand was *low level and too easy*.

**Financial / Professional motivations:** Only one motivation contributing to a student's happiness was mentioned. On a positive note a student believed that their New Zealand school experience would help them greatly in their future career.

**Physical Environment:** *Great lifestyle and activities* was the biggest positive contributing towards student satisfaction (8 students). This was followed closely by *beautiful nature* with five respondents making a mention of it. Being a *safe country* was brought up twice, as was the interesting *culture*. The *good weather* also warranted a mention by one respondent. From a negative point of view, New Zealand was labelled *boring* by one respondent.

**Personal / Human motivations:** This area appears to be the one which attracted the most answers from respondents. *Great people and friends* was brought up as a positive point contributing towards student happiness with 12 students mentioning it, followed by *Great experience / opportunity* to study in New Zealand (9 students) and a *love for New Zealand* in general (8 students). Four students mentioned their host family and *personal development* being brought up by two respondents. From a negative perspective 4 students struggled with an *English speaking environment*, three found it *hard to make friends*, two thought there were just *too many international students* and one student *missed home*.

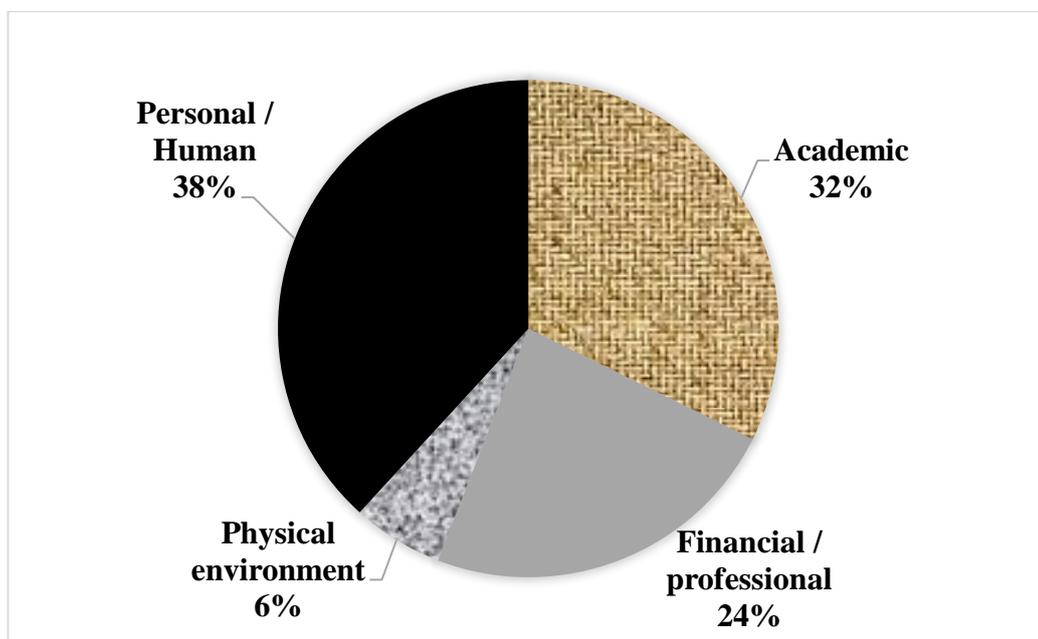
## 5.9 Should I stay or should I go?

The final questions asked students if there were any final comments they had regarding staying in New Zealand or returning home to study at tertiary level. Some students had a definite idea of what they were doing or where they were going. Others were still really undecided with many options to consider.

### 5.9.1 Motivations to stay

For 13 students **personal and human motivations** proved to be the main impetus to continue their studies in New Zealand. These included *a love for New Zealand in general* (5 responses), having a *good experience* (4), *good people* and *making international connections* with two mentions each. This was followed closely by **academic motivations**, which were listed by 11 students. These included *better quality education in New Zealand* (5 counts), world ranking of Auckland University (2), the perception that *study is easier in New Zealand* (2) and one mention each for

wanting to *study in English* and that it is *quicker to get a medical degree in New Zealand* than in other destinations. **Financial and professional motivations** were the next most relevant category for students with eight counts. These included opening the door for *future work possibilities* (3), that New Zealand is *cheaper than other overseas study destinations* (2) wanting to gain residency (2), and if *scholarships* were available to international students (1). There were four mentions of the **physical environment** as being motivation to stay. This included two mentions of a great natural environment and two for the range of outdoor activities available.

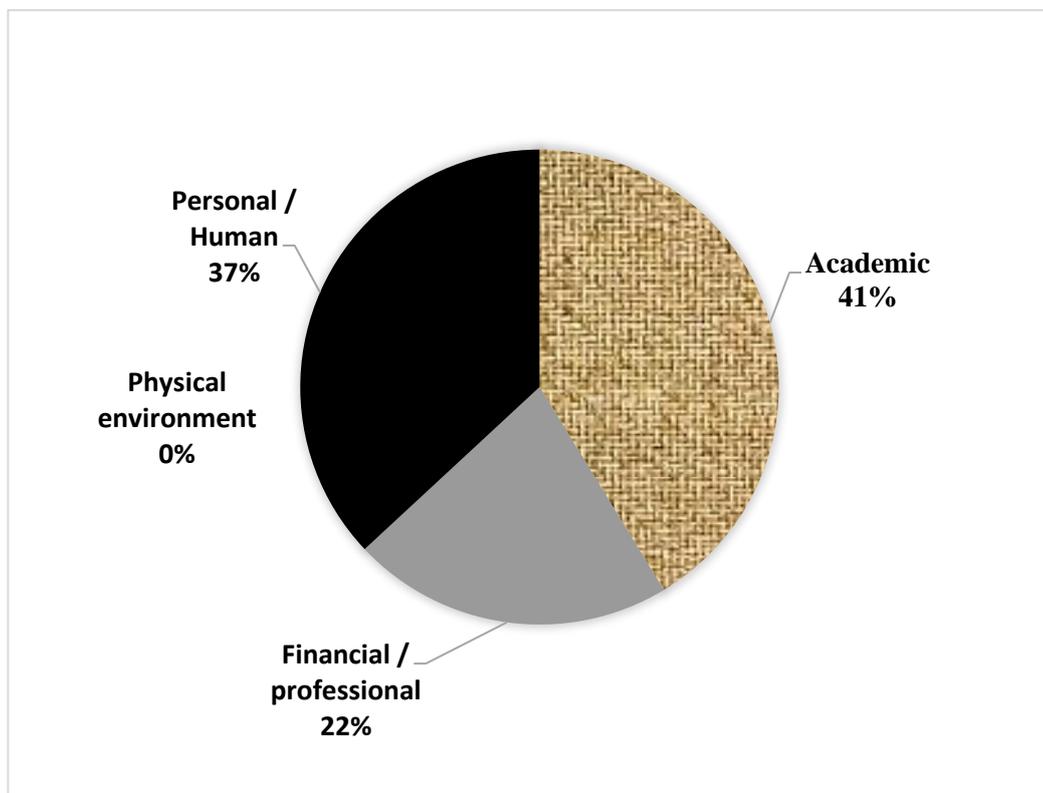


**Figure 9:** Student motivations to stay in New Zealand (n - 132)

### 5.9.2 Motivations to go

**Academic motivators** appear to be the leading factors for students to return home with 19 counts. A total of nine students wanted to return home to *attend university* without citing any specific reason why, and six students believe that the education system is better in their home country. *Studying in their own language* was a major drawcard for three students, and one wants to *finish high school* at home. Academic motivators were followed closely by **personal and human** motivators with 17 counts. Other factors mentioned were that six students *miss home*, five mentioned *family* and three mentioned *friends*, and three students mention specific personal

circumstances such as being unhappy in their host family, parents wanting the student to return home, and having a better social life at home. Ten students mentioned **financial and professional** motivators as drivers to return home. These included the fact it is *cheaper* to study at home (5), that qualifications from home open doors to *better work opportunities* both at home and overseas (4), and along a similar line one student mentioned it was *hard to find work in New Zealand*. No students listed any elements of the **physical environment** at home to be a drawcard to return.



**Figure 10: Motivations of students to leave New Zealand (n =132)**

The internal debate of push-pull factors students' face in their decision-making, which was discussed in the literature review, is summed up by one student's thoughts:

I'm not sure if I want to finish my study in New Zealand, but I'm sure if it continues it will be better for me to be able to improve my knowledge, and have more contacts with people from different

countries, doing what I have more experiences and learning different cultures, but first I need to get back to my house and be assured that I will have the courage to finish my studies and start my university here, because I'm sure that the educational system it's better than Brazil. New Zealand is wonderful.

The key findings and this complex mesh of push-pull factors and their effect on student decision-making are discussed in the following chapter.

## Chapter 6: Discussion of findings

### 6.1 Introduction

The aim of the study was to gain a better understanding of motivations and reasons that shape international high school students' decisions to transition onto tertiary studies in New Zealand or to return home. Better understanding student motivations could provide tertiary institutions with an insight as to the factors to consider when creating international student-friendly environments that would attract more students to remain in New Zealand. This is particularly relevant when considering those students currently studying in New Zealand who are *undecided* as to where they will study at tertiary level, but also when talking to students before they have even left their home countries to embark on their overseas education journey.

Using a mixed-method research design, qualitative and quantitative data were collected using focus groups and an online survey in which students were asked about their experiences of living and learning in New Zealand and in their home country, and were prompted to clarify *when* their future study plans were made (*before* arriving in New Zealand or *after* arriving in New Zealand).

The majority (78%) of respondents in the study were from the Bay of Plenty and 22% were from the Waikato, which, given the small sample size, should be taken into account when parallels are drawn between the New Zealand regions. When looking at the demographics of respondents broken down according to their international regions, 50% of students identified as coming from Asia, 39% from Europe, 7% from South America and other regions 3%. All but two of the 37 German respondents studied in the Bay of Plenty, and the majority of mainland Chinese respondents (10) were studying in Waikato and six were from Bay of Plenty. This imbalance of European versus Asian students across my study could lead to a bias when making comparisons between the New Zealand regions as European students' thoughts around continuing their tertiary studies in New Zealand were found to be different from those from Asian countries.

For the purpose of clarity the discussion of results is divided into four domains based on the *push-pull* model of international student flows (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002):

- Push factors – Home Country (What makes students want to leave home?)
- Pull factors – Study Destination (What draws students to and keeps students in New Zealand?)
- Push factors – Study Destination (What makes a student want to leave New Zealand?)
- Pull factors – Home Country (What draws a student back home?)

Within each of these four domains four groups of *motivating factors are identified*:

- Academic Motivations
- Professional & Financial Motivations
- Physical Environment
- Personal & Human Motivations

The implications of these findings could offer an insight into which factors are important to students when making their future study plans. The unique contribution of this research is that not only does it ask questions about *what* students plan to do when they leave high school in New Zealand, but *why* they make the decisions they do (i.e., what their motivating factors were in their decision making). The study also asks about *when* these decisions about their future study pathways were made. Finally it asks about students' *perceptions* of their tertiary study options in New Zealand versus other overseas destinations or those they have back home, but most importantly *what*, if anything would encourage them to stay. These are the gaps in the research thus far on the transition between high school and tertiary studies that this study seeks to answer in a regional context.

## 6.2 What makes students want to leave home?

The results of this study indicate that the primary motivator for international students to leave home is of an *academic* nature with 45% of all respondents perceiving that the education system in New Zealand is better than it is in their home country. This was particularly evident among students from the Asia/Pacific region with two thirds of students either agreeing or strongly agreeing when perceiving this to be the case. Similar results were observed in studies by Fang and Wang (2014), Hazen and Alberts (2006), and Mazzarol and Soutar (2002). One of the educational differences between their home countries and New Zealand was highlighted in the focus group interviews where many Asian students felt under a lot of *stress and pressure back home*, and felt that they could maintain focus more easily on five subjects a day in New Zealand schools rather than seven or eight back home. In contrast, over half of the European students either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that the education system in New Zealand is better than in their home country. Thus, this is a very important cultural distinction to make when approaching Asian and European students in their home countries with regards to the possibility of studying in New Zealand. European students are more likely to be attracted by the lifestyle and physical environment in New Zealand where the academic environment and the quality of education is more likely to be a pull factor for Asian students. In addition, given that only a quarter of students indicated that they were *dissatisfied with the education system in their home country* and only a few students indicated that they were *failing in the education system back home*, the results strongly indicate that most students are more attracted by the positives in the host country (i.e., New Zealand) than they are repelled by the negative perceptions and/or experiences in their home country's education system. Students in the focus group interviews also commented that the school environment in New Zealand is *less competitive* than back home, making for a more relaxed and stress-free study experience.

*Personal & Human Motivations* are the next biggest influence on the decision of students to leave home. Three quarters of students reported that *they* themselves had *a lot or the biggest influence* on their decision to study abroad, and half of students said that their parents had a strong influence. *Personal choice* is the biggest factor for European students and *parents* is the biggest factor for Asian

students. Asian students are also more likely to be influenced by an education marketing *agent*, while European students felt that the agents had little influence on their decision. This finding resonates with the research of Fang and Wang (2014) about Chinese student motivations and the influence that *family pressure and expectations* have on students to go and get an international education. This finding also resonates with the work by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002). Further, *international managers from New Zealand* had much more influence on Asian students than on European students. This indicates that education marketing activities in Europe need to be directed at the students themselves and their parents, while in Asian markets, the parents should be the primary focus followed by the students themselves and then the agents.

*Professional & Financial Motivations* were the least frequently chosen motivating factors in students' decision-making. *Perceived lack of freedom* in some countries or *political and economic instability* did not appear to be motivating factors in this study although this was noted in a number of studies internationally (Alberts & Hazen, 2005, 2006; Li & Bray, 2007; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). The difference in findings could be due to the differences in social awareness in different aged students. The aforementioned studies dealt with older students in tertiary education while my study focused on high school students.

### **6.3 What draws students to and keeps students in New Zealand?**

#### ***6.3.1 Motivators to come to New Zealand initially***

*Academic Motivations* played a very large part in students' decision-making. The vast majority (90%) came to New Zealand to study so that they can *improve their English*. This was also found to be the case by Baláž and Williams (2004), Fang and Wang (2014) and the i-grad survey (2015). It is important to note that this was the number one motivator for the vast majority of students regardless of their region of origin.

The *wide range of subjects available* in New Zealand schools proved very popular amongst the students surveyed, with over three quarters of students choosing this as one of the key reasons for choosing New Zealand as their study destination. This is something for international managers to keep in mind when recruiting offshore students. The focus groups showed that many students felt they

were restricted in their home country with the type and/or number of subjects that they could study. Of particular mention were art subjects like graphic design, fashion and music, as well as outdoor education. When researching study destinations, one student observed that Canada and America do not have the same flexibility of subject choice as New Zealand. No other literature covered in this study has mentioned this as a motivating factor, but it was prevalent in this study.

*Positive aspects of the New Zealand education system* were brought up by students anecdotally in the focus group interviews. Students liked *NCEA's internal assessment*. As one student put it: “the internals is like research and you have a period of time to do it, it's not a test... so it's more relaxing as you can organise your own time”. Another thing about this method of assessment is that it is practical and leaves room for self-expression. One student summed it up nicely: “Everything is more practical, there are experiments all the time, there is a lot of writing rather than multi-choice”. *Quality student-teacher relationships* were also mentioned in the focus groups: “I really enjoy that teacher and student are actually more like good friends” said one student, and many participants agreed that teachers earn respect from their students by showing respect to their students rather than the ‘master and subject’ teacher-student relationship back home. In general, students want to feel happy and relaxed in their study environment and many Asian students felt, that in this respect, New Zealand offered a better quality education than back home.

*Physical Environment* is the second biggest motivating factor to bring students to New Zealand. The perception that New Zealand is *clean, green and beautiful* was expressed by almost all respondents. This is in line with the findings of by Deloitte and Touche (2008), Baláž and Williams (2004), i-grad survey (2015), Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), and Hazen and Alberts, (2006). Next to nature, the second biggest drawcard for students is that New Zealand is seen as a *safe* environment—these results resonate with those of Zhang and Brunton (2007), Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), Singh et al. (2014), Deloitte and Touche (2008), and the i-grad survey (2015). Both the survey and the focus groups revealed this to be the case. One student, in particular, mentioned the “gun” problem in the USA and the number of school shootings. Asian parents in particular seemed to be very particular about safety. A student from Japan commented that her parents thought

she could get shot if people discriminated against her in the USA. The perception of safety is one area where New Zealand's international reputation as a safe travel destination features highly in student and parent decisions.

*Professional & Financial Motivations* also featured in student decision-making. *Improved future job opportunities* both back home and overseas featured strongly as the motivators, which is similar to results of Hazen and Alberts (2006). The *cost* of studying in New Zealand was generally acknowledged as being cheaper than other overseas English-speaking study destinations, but it was not brought up by students in this study as the strongest influence. With regards to tertiary fees, eight out of 17 students were undecided about continuing their studies in New Zealand, and they wanted the fees to be lower – with seven out of 17 wanting scholarships to be available to international students. However, cost of fees was identified as a major factor for international students when selecting a school in the i-grad survey (2015). Although not coming through as the biggest motivator in this study, the literature suggests that remaining cost-competitive with other destinations is still important for the New Zealand export education industry.

### ***6.3.2 Motivators to stay in New Zealand to continue tertiary studies***

As well as being a major reason to come to New Zealand, academic motivations were the most cited reasons to stay. For those students who indicated they are planning to stay on, students felt staying in New Zealand was attractive because it has a good education system, students can develop their English skills, there are more study opportunities here than at home, and New Zealand offers a relaxed study environment.

Overall, when asked about their perceptions of tertiary education in New Zealand and how this influences their plans to stay or leave New Zealand after high school, similar themes emerged. A wider range of subjects available than back home came out as the number one motivator, followed by the perception that New Zealand offers a good study environment for international students. Around one quarter of all students also felt that it would be easy to get into polytechnic or university with their NCEA degree from high school, and a similar number felt that New Zealand offered a better quality education than what is available to them back home. Studying in English was not seen as a major barrier to students, especially

for the European students, and many felt they were used to the study style in New Zealand. Students also felt that they could achieve good results as there is less competition than back home.

For the *undecided* respondents, the top three academic factors which would motivate them to stay on in New Zealand were: if someone would help them decide *what* to study, if there was good *academic support* for international students and if someone from the University or Polytechnic would come and explain the *study options* to them. The need for additional academic support was a theme that also emerged in the research done by Skyrme and White (2011), Deloitte and Touche, (2008), Campbell and Li (2008), and Smith and Rae (2006). What this suggests is that an increased presence by Universities or Polytechnics in the high school international departments in the Bay of Plenty and Waikato could help students decide to continue their tertiary studies in New Zealand. Although the percentage of undecided respondents in this study was only 14% (17 students), on a national level this number is about 26% of the over 2000 high school students over 16 years of age who responded to the i-grad survey (2015). This 26% would represent over 500 international students who could potentially be swayed to stay in New Zealand. It is interesting to note here, that according to my study, universities have a greater chance of retaining these students as the big universities tended to be the favoured choice for continuing their studies in New Zealand. Of the nine respondents who would consider getting their degree at a polytechnic none was European.

Students who are unsure about what to do after finishing high school would consider staying in New Zealand to study if the study fees were lower than what they are now and if there were scholarships available to international students. This issue of cost being a considerable factor in student decision-making confirms the findings of Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), and the i-grad survey (2015). One of the biggest factors facing students is that even though New Zealand may be competitive on the international stage from an educational fees perspective. New Zealand does not enter into the comparison when students consider returning to tertiary study back home, where fees are much cheaper or in some cases are free. This was a re-occurring theme in this study, especially among European students as already indicated in that they have access to low-cost, high-quality tertiary education back

home. However, these *financial* motivations still appear not to be as important as the *academic* motivations in students deciding to stay in New Zealand.

Personal & Human Motivations were the third most frequently chosen factors impacting students' decisions on whether or not to stay in New Zealand to study at tertiary level. Having friends or family in New Zealand has the biggest influence, followed by the opportunities for personal growth. Not having too many international students of the same nationality in one institution is appealing to students because the possibility to interact with other nationals and New Zealand students is beneficial to learning English and making friends, which is much harder to do if students only stick with their own nationals at school. In the focus groups, those students who succeeded in making friends had a much more positive view of their life in New Zealand. This corroborates the findings of Smith and Rae (2006), as well as the themes which emerged from the i-grad survey (2015). When considering these findings in light of encouraging students to stay on to continue their studies in New Zealand, finding a way to increase the level of interaction between domestic and international students could be the key to providing that inclusive, supportive study environment which students thrive in. For many students the choice to stay boiled down to a love for New Zealand in general, which often hinged on people they had met and positive experiences they had had.

The *physical environment* cannot be overlooked as a drawcard for students. It features much more strongly in students' decisions to choose New Zealand initially over other offshore study destinations, and is largely acknowledged by students as contributing to their motivation to stay. In the focus group interviews, New Zealand's kind people, the great lifestyle and a relaxed social environment rated higher than even academic factors. Although tertiary institutions cannot do a lot to influence New Zealand's physical environment, they can highlight the facilities available to students on their respective campuses and increase opportunities for students to be exposed to some of the beautiful natural attractions and adventure activities which the country offers.

#### **6.4 What makes students want to leave New Zealand?**

The results in this section focus on two groups of students – those who are planning to go to another country to complete their tertiary studies (14%), and those who are planning to return home (53%).

For students who reported that they are planning to go to another country for their tertiary studies, *academic motivations* provided the biggest driver for students to choose another country to complete their tertiary studies. The reasons cited were mainly related to the quality of education being better than in New Zealand and that the qualifications they were hoping to receive elsewhere would be more respected internationally and back in their home countries than those from New Zealand. The subjects students planned to study overseas are: business studies / media / marketing (5), engineering (4), English (2), medicine / health (2), and fashion, psychology, environmental management, and aviation (one student in each of these subjects). All of these options are available in New Zealand, so it appears that it is not the uniqueness of these subjects, but the perceived superior quality of the degrees that causes students to go overseas to pursue their studies.

According to the focus group interviews, there is more opportunity to discuss the negative aspects of student life in New Zealand. Participants felt that in high school, if an international student did not grasp the nuance of the question asked, it affected their ability to complete their assignments. This theme also emerged in studies by Alberts and Hazen (2005), Toyokawa and Toyokawa (2002), and Smith and Rae, (2006). The general feeling among students was that *New Zealand teachers were there to teach New Zealand students* and the respondents felt somewhat isolated. Students expressed feelings like “they (teachers) think we are only here to learn English and the teachers don’t really help us” and “some teachers don’t have the patience to listen to us, they ignore us sometimes”. This frustration with New Zealand teachers was also noted in the study by Campbell and Li (2008). In this study, such teachers were in the minority and students did acknowledge that overall their New Zealand classroom experience was a positive one. There is a perception by international students that the ability to collect minimum credits to pass a subject in NCEA led to *New Zealand students having a lazy attitude* towards their studies compared to students in Asia which backs up

findings by Campbell and Li (2008).

One noteworthy difference between this research and previous research is that *studying in English* did not emerge as the major barrier for students to achieve their academic goals, particularly in the focus groups, and for the European students in the survey. This may be the case because the focus group respondents were 18 years old and had been in New Zealand for at least a year. This is in contrast to the findings of Zhang and Brunton (2007), who observed that language barriers were a major concern for Asian students completing their studies in New Zealand. This confidence by older Asian students and European students in their English faculty could be an indication that students who have completed high school in New Zealand could be better positioned to tackle tertiary studies in New Zealand than those who are coming straight into tertiary studies from overseas.

The physical environment featured in students' responses in reasons to leave New Zealand, mostly in terms of how schools' rules affected their personal lives. This desire to leave is somewhat ironic given that the 'Code of Practice' which dictates the care of international students (and therefore also the rules), and is designed to protect students and ensure that the quality of their education experience in New Zealand is also one of the main reasons students don't want to stay. This was particularly the case with the respondents for the focus group who were aged 18 or over. They cited issues such as not being allowed to drive, having to police check every friends' parents when they want to have a sleepover at a friend's house and not being able to drink alcohol when the laws of the country allow it as frustrations. It also appears that anything that impacts on their social lives is seen as a major barrier for students in maximizing their social experience in New Zealand. In short, many Asian students thought that *living in New Zealand was 'boring'* compared to their lives in their home countries, many of whom come from large urban centres. Students miss the bright lights and big city as well as *freedom from the strict rules for international students* in New Zealand. This perception could be kept in mind by tertiary institutions when painting a picture of the environment set for international students hoping to attend university or polytechnic, as for many young adults *personal freedom* is a very strong driver.

With regards to Personal & Human Motivations, some students mentioned that there were *issues with segregation* from the domestic student population due to language and cultural differences. One student summed it up with this statement: “They think we hang out with our own groups and we are just good at maths but we work hard at it, not born with it. We need to speak English well to make friends with them, and then they call us introverted”. Students commented that both at school and in society it was acknowledged that there was an amount of ignorance and arrogance among some young people in regard to accepting people from other cultures. Another student from China noted that “People have a lot of racial stereotypes like Asians can’t drive and stuff, you feel embarrassed but it’s not actually true”. Nevertheless, most interviewed and surveyed international students had positive experiences with New Zealanders, and these isolated instances of discrimination were in the minority. The results highlight the importance of tertiary institutions providing an inclusive environment for international students and to train academic staff on how to teach a multicultural classroom with students who are not native speakers of English.

### **6.5 What draws students back home?**

*Personal and human motivations* are the biggest motivating factors for students to return home. Seeing *family and friends* again and returning to a familiar culture, language, food and social life were all elements which emerged as pull factors for international students. These factors came out very strongly in the focus group discussions and in the wider survey. These are themes which also emerged in the work of Hazen and Alberts (2006), Fang and Wang (2014), Butcher et al. (2008), and Campbell and Li (2008). Family pressure to return home outweighed many students’ personal desires to stay in New Zealand, especially among Asian students where parental influence is the number one influence in decision-making.

Further, *academic motivations* also dominated many students’ reasons to return home. Because some of the respondents were 16 years old, and had never intended to stay to complete high school in New Zealand, they planned to return home to finish high school rather than consider moving onto tertiary education in New Zealand. Of the other students who are finishing high school in New Zealand, 40% still think they have better tertiary options back home. This view was

particularly strong amongst European students. The comfort of *studying in their own language* was the main drawcard that emerged and a number of students were adamant that the quality of education and *world rankings* of universities at home were better, although a large number of Asian students still thought the options and quality of education available to them in New Zealand to be superior to what was available to them at home.

*Professional & Financial Motivations* to return were mainly related to the cost of study. Many students, especially the Europeans, believe they have access to high quality low cost education at home with qualifications which are well regarded by employers in their home countries, although one Thai student noted that she would need to attend an international university at home since she had completed high school overseas, so the cost would be the same as studying at a tertiary institution in New Zealand.

In summary, although this study is a snapshot in time (2015-2016) and place (Bay of Plenty and Waikato), the themes which have emerged could be relevant to other New Zealand regions as well. If the results of this study prove to be useful, and/or relevant to schools and tertiary institutions, the study could easily be replicated and extended to a national audience in the future. The following section draws some conclusions from this research and offers some recommendations to high schools and tertiary providers which, based on these findings, could be used to attract more international students to New Zealand, create the best possible environment for them whilst they are here and might offer insights as to what could encourage students to stay on in New Zealand to complete their tertiary studies.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations**

The aim of the research was to find out what the main motivating factors are for international high school students to continue on to tertiary studies in New Zealand, or why some students just prefer to return home. The study considers the complex mesh of push-pull factors and their effect on student decision-making. The rationale for the study was that if the motivating factors are identified and better understood, it could be possible to create an environment in New Zealand tertiary institutions to encourage more students to stay and study here. The question for the institutions then would be to assess if it is possible to create such environment that could attract more domestic international students and that, furthermore, would be at a lower cost than recruiting internationally. Another driver for the research was to see if any evidence emerged which supports the idea that students who are already studying in New Zealand are already accustomed to the New Zealand way of life and education system. Thus, the aim of this study is to show that not only is it financially viable to recruit students domestically, but that this focus on domestic international student recruitment could have substantial social and cultural benefits, and could provide tertiary institutions with more able students.

This chapter provides an overview summary in response to my question: *What are the motivating factors underpinning the reasons international students studying at high schools in New Zealand decide to transition onto tertiary studies in New Zealand, or to return home?* In providing this summary I will reiterate the key points of this study and provide recommendations to tertiary providers on which key messages and activities are most likely to attract larger numbers of domestic international students.

### **7.1 Summary of the findings**

The results of the current study suggest international students come to New Zealand because it has a good education system which offers a good environment for international students and there is a wide range of subjects available. In addition, the country is perceived as clean and beautiful and offers a safe environment to students.

Students come to the Bay of Plenty region for the lifestyle and are less likely to continue to tertiary studies in New Zealand than students from the Waikato region. Furthermore, according to students' future study plans, the Bay of Plenty was not set to retain any of the students surveyed, while the Waikato region was set to retain half of the students surveyed in the Waikato. The students more likely to stay on are of Asian descent, perceiving that the quality of education in New Zealand is high and that New Zealand offers a good study environment for international students. These students' decisions are strongly influenced by their parents, education agents back home and international managers from New Zealand. European students make their own study destination decisions with the support of their parents, have more confidence than Asian students in their English ability, but are more likely to return home where they have access to low cost, high quality education. The results also indicate that three quarters of students made their future study plans *before* they came to New Zealand. The results also confirm that students who have been in New Zealand for over a year do not see studying in English as a major barrier to completing their studies, but for those leaving, the main attraction is to study in a familiar culture and language with the support of friends and family.

The results have potentially strong implications for attracting students who are undecided in their future education decision. Namely, these students could be encouraged to stay if they were offered more access to career advice and if someone from the universities or polytechnics would come and explain the study options to them. The tertiary environment students would thrive in would be one which offered high, internationally well-regarded qualifications, a supportive academic environment, financial support, and the opportunity to get out and enjoy New Zealand's natural environment and interact with New Zealand students.

## **7.2 Key findings and recommendations**

There are definite regional differences in these trends with the Waikato set to retain 50% of the students surveyed from Waikato high schools into tertiary education (around half of which plan to stay in the Waikato), versus around 10% of students surveyed in the Bay of Plenty (none of which are planning to stay in the Bay of Plenty). This difference in students' plans, in these two regions, could be an

indication of how the international high school study experience is ‘sold’ to students from the outset. It appears that many students come to the Bay of Plenty under the guise of ‘Come study and play’, which could also contribute to the large number of European and South American students seeking the lifestyle of the Bay of Plenty compared to more academically focused Asian students in the Waikato. The results suggest that those international students who come to the Waikato high schools come with a longer term academic plan. For the international students in the Bay of Plenty this lack of planning to transition to tertiary education within the Bay of Plenty could be improved by changing the marketing phrase to ‘Come, study, play and stay’, especially if the degree options locally could be highlighted to students at school both in New Zealand and overseas, as well as at careers fairs or through agents in their home countries. The cause of this lack of desire to stay could also be an indication that students do not see a major university presence in Tauranga which could be aided by an increased presence by Waikato University and Waiariki Bay of Plenty Polytechnic in the local high school international departments. Students therefore consider their options elsewhere at New Zealand’s bigger universities and universities overseas.

The students who are more likely to stay in New Zealand to continue their tertiary studies are from Asian regions who generally perceive New Zealand to offer a better quality education and more study options than their home countries, and a good environment for international students (only 3% of students who said that they are planning to stay in New Zealand were from Europe). The results of this study further suggest that the strongest influence on Asian students’ decision-making are their *parents* and *education agents* in their home country, and *international managers* from New Zealand. European students were more likely to make their future study decisions themselves and are unlikely to be swayed to continue onto tertiary studies in New Zealand due to their perception that they have access to lower cost, higher quality education back home.

It is of considerable interest that results of this study corroborate earlier findings (Soon, 2008), and that most students had made their decision about what they intended to do after completing high school in New Zealand even *before* they left their home country. What this indicates is that tertiary providers would have the

greatest chance of success in attracting students to stay in New Zealand to complete their tertiary studies if they directed their marketing efforts at students and their parents in their home countries, even before the students came to high school in New Zealand. The results strongly suggest that joint offshore marketing initiatives by high schools, universities and polytechnics would be beneficial to provide a suitable study pathway from high school to tertiary education. Whilst this is not a new approach to education marketing, this study shows that such collaborations could be the best means to attract and retain students in areas not dominated by a major university, such as the Bay of Plenty. This approach may be most effective if the efforts were targeted specifically at parents and agents in Asian countries.

The results of this study also strongly suggest that academic factors, particularly the quality of the education in New Zealand (for Asian students particularly), the wide range of subjects available and the educationally appealing study environment for international students would need to be kept in mind when developing programmes to bring international students to New Zealand. These factors tend not only to be the biggest motivations for students to *come to*, but also *remain in* New Zealand. The quality of education and good study environments have been covered in international studies (Alberts & Hazen, 2005; Fang & Wang, 2014; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) but the *wide range of subjects available* at school and in tertiary education seems to be a finding unique to this study. The beautiful, clean New Zealand environment and the fact that New Zealand is a cost competitive study destination which provides qualifications that are well regarded by employers both nationally and internationally are both strong motivators for high school students choose to come to New Zealand and to continue onto tertiary studies. These are the messages that high schools and tertiary providers need to put forward to potential students when approaching parents and agents in the offshore marketing efforts.

As was mentioned a number of times throughout this study, the students who are already in New Zealand but are undecided about their plans where to study further could be potentially encouraged to stay in New Zealand if this was done in conjunction with good careers advice from schools, and a representative from the polytechnic or university would inform students and their parents about the study

options and available academic support for students. According to this study it is likely that the majority of these students who are undecided are from the Asia/Pacific region and the results suggest that they could be potentially influenced to choose to remain in New Zealand if there were ways for them to save money in terms of lower scholarships fees for example. When targeting marketing efforts to domestic international students, it is also important to bear in mind that cohorts of students are more likely to stay if they have established friendships or family in New Zealand.

Highlighting opportunities to interact with New Zealand's stunning physical environment and with other New Zealand students is also a major drawcard for students. This is an area where tertiary providers could increase their current provision if they wish to create an environment attractive to international students. This could be done by having an established programme of day trips or extended trips, outdoor recreation or sports clubs, or by the student support staff at polytechnics or universities making a conscious effort to include international students in social activities such as 'O-Week' activities, quiz nights and/or on/off campus sports and arts events.

Family and friends are undoubtedly the biggest reasons for students to leave New Zealand, and in the case of the European students, this pull factor is strengthened by the perception that they have better quality and cheaper tertiary options in their home countries, which appears to be a finding unique to this study. If tertiary institutions could provide opportunities for students to interact with New Zealand students and families, it could provide a more attractive environment for them to stay, but we must also be realistic and acknowledge that for many students, family relationships and the comforts of home will always be the biggest motivation for students to return home to study.

### **7:3 Contribution of this research and future research**

The unique contribution of this research is that not only does it provide answers to questions about *what* students plan to do when they leave high school in New Zealand, but *why* they made this decision i.e., what their motivating factors were in their decision-making, and *when* these decisions about their future study pathways were made. Finally, the study offers insights into students' *perceptions* of their

tertiary study options in New Zealand and in other overseas destinations and back home, but, and most importantly, it enquires into *what*, if anything, would encourage them to stay. These are the gaps in the previous national and international research on the transition between high school and tertiary studies that the current study addresses in a regional context.

The main weakness of this study is the small cohort of students which were surveyed in the Waikato, and the exclusion of Rotorua in the survey. Rotorua is another distinct region with over 700 international students attending Waiariki Institute of Technology (so named at the time of this study). The thinking behind this study was to assess the effectiveness of the partnership between Bay of Plenty Polytechnic and Waikato University in the Bay of Plenty with regards to attracting international students. Parallels and comparisons were drawn between the very different sample sizes of the Bay of Plenty and Waikato and the researcher acknowledges that this could have skewed the results, given that the Waikato respondents only numbered 26 and were mostly from the Asia /Pacific region, who having differing outlooks on tertiary education to the large European cohort surveyed in the Bay of Plenty.

To conclude, domestic international students should not be overlooked by tertiary institutions which intend to attract more students. They are acclimatised to the study style, have a good level of English, have formed personal relationships and in many cases have already fallen in love with the country. Although results suggest that universities are better placed than polytechnics to attract a larger number of New Zealand international students, there is still plenty of room to grow the number of international students staying in New Zealand to complete their tertiary studies. If tertiary providers invest the time and effort to engage with these students, together with high schools, before the students come to New Zealand, through informing parents and agents about the options for long term study plans, especially in Asian countries, positive results could be delivered. For the students who are undecided about their future plans in New Zealand, it appears that one way to attract them to remain in New Zealand could be for tertiary international liaison staff to work with the career and international departments in high schools, by going to the schools and talking to students. These students could also be brought onto

campus to highlight study and career options which could be of interest to them.

This study was a small regional snapshot of student motivations. Further research could be conducted on a national level with a much larger cohort of students to identify the motivations of students from individual countries rather than international regions, as was done in this study. It seems that international student levels of satisfaction and experience at both high school and tertiary level did not differ markedly throughout the years, as was shown in the Deloitte and Touche's (2008) survey and i-grad survey (2015), and these high levels of student satisfaction re-occurred in this study. Additionally, future research could focus in more depth on high school to tertiary studies transition. As was demonstrated in this research, each region yields its own distinctive results, so having the ability to split this data by region to assess regional trends in retaining students could be of further value. Strategies to attract more international students in successful institutions and regions could be adopted by regions who attract and retain fewer international students. The ability to split a large sample size by nationality would be essential in order to identify different student motivations so as to be able to develop a unique and targeted marketing message for each offshore market. I believe that the results of this wider survey could help both high schools and tertiary institutions to create a positive academic and social environment to attract and retain larger numbers of international students and thus contribute to the New Zealand Government's (Education New Zealand, 2015) identified target of increasing the economic benefit to New Zealand from international students to \$5 billion and the value of offshore education services to \$500 million by 2025.

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## Appendices

**1: Table 1: Demographic of focus group respondents**

<i>Total Respondents 14</i>	<b>Focus group 1 (5)</b>	<b>Focus group 2 (5)</b>	<b>Focus group 3 (4)</b>	<b>Total (14)</b>
<b>Age:</b>				
18	4	5	3	<b>12</b>
19	1			<b>1</b>
20			1	<b>1</b>
<b>Gender:</b>				
M	1	4		<b>5</b>
F	4	1	4	<b>9</b>
<b>Time in NZ (years)</b>				
>1			2	<b>2</b>
2	2	2	2	<b>6</b>
3	2	2		<b>4</b>
4	1			<b>1</b>
5		1		<b>1</b>

	<b>Focus group 1 (5)</b>	<b>Focus group 2 (5)</b>	<b>Focus group 3 (4)</b>	
<b>Country of origin</b>				
China		1		<b>1</b>
Hong Kong	1	1	1	<b>3</b>
Taiwan	1	2		<b>3</b>
South Korea		1		<b>1</b>
Japan	2			<b>2</b>
Thailand	1			<b>1</b>
Germany			1	<b>1</b>
Ethiopia			1	<b>1</b>
Papua New Guinea			1	<b>1</b>
<b>Future study plans</b>				
Stay in NZ	1	2	2	<b>5</b>
Go home	1	2	1	<b>5</b>
Other overseas destination	1	1		<b>2</b>
Undecided	2		1	<b>3</b>

## 2: Participant Information Sheet – Focus Groups

### *Participant Information Focus Groups*

*Should I stay or should I go now?*

*Views of international high school students on completing their tertiary education in New Zealand*

#### **Information for participants:**

Hi, my name is Scott Henderson, and I am a doing my Master's degree in Education. I'd like to invite you to participate in my research project on the views of international high school students on completing their tertiary education in New Zealand. This study is part of my research for my thesis. I became interested in this topic through years of working with international students and working with students considering their future study options.

Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, thank you. There are no right or wrong answers as I am only interested in your point of view. If you decide not to take part, there will be no disadvantage to you, and I thank you for considering my request.

#### **What will happen?**

I would like to conduct a **focus group**, a **one hour** group conversation which will be recorded.

A **focus group** is a group conversation of **6-8 people** around a topic. In this case the people will all be international students and the topic is your future study intentions. I will ask general questions, for example: Why did you choose to study in New Zealand? Then all members will have a chance to answer if they want to. Often someone else's answer will give you ideas for your answer. The answers may be the same or very different and that's ok. I want to hear your views. The topics

we will discuss are: Reasons for coming to New Zealand to study, motivations to stay and study in New Zealand, motivations to leave New Zealand and motivations to return home.

The focus group will be organised with your international manager and be during the lunch break, in early Term 4 2015. We will meet in a class close to your international department, and I'll provide some food, and we can relax and have a conversation about your future study plans.

If you want to check your answers, I can email them to you. (There is a place for this on the **consent form** which I'll give you). Once the focus group recording has been typed up I can send it to you for checking. This should take not more than **20 minutes**.

### **What will happen with the information?**

The aim of the research is to find out what the main motivating factors are for international students to continue on to tertiary studies in New Zealand, or why some students prefer to return home. If the motivating factors are better understood, the benefit is that it should be possible for tertiary institutions to create a more attractive environment for students to stay and study in New Zealand. The results of the focus groups and follow up survey will form the basis of my thesis around international student motivations.

The study could also be used in publications, reports and presentations. You will own and have the opportunity to review your answers (raw data) and I will own the thesis, copyright and any scholarly publications and/or presentations that arise from it.

### **Anonymity/Confidentiality (Privacy):**

All information will remain confidential and no real names of individuals or schools will be used in the study. All your private information will be treated as confidential (private) and will be kept in a password protected computer and paper copies in a locked filing cabinet.

Please note that while every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality, this cannot be 100% guaranteed

**Pulling out of the study:**

Participation is voluntary: you have the right to decline to participate. I can send you copy of your answers by email for checking. You can then choose to change your answers or ask for your answers to be excluded from the results at that time.

**Accessing the information:**

If you have any queries about this focus group process or questionnaire, or if you wish to see a copy of the results, please contact me, Scott Henderson, (youcandoit88@hotmail.com) or the Supervisor Dr Judy Hunter, University of Waikato (jmhunter@waikato.ac.nz). A copy of the thesis will be lodged in the UOW Research Commons Database. <http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/>

Once you have read this information, please complete and sign the **Participant Consent form** if you would like to be part of the study. Please keep a copy of this information for your records.

This research has been approved by the University of Waikato Faculty of Education Ethics Committee

Thank you very much for your time.

Yours Sincerely,

Scott Henderson

Researcher

021511151

### 3: Consent form – Focus Groups

#### *Consent form Participants*

##### **Focus group**

Should I stay or should I go now?

Views of international high school students on completing their tertiary education in New Zealand

My name is Scott, and I am a doing my Master's degree in Education. I need your consent to be able to ask you questions in the focus groups.

Please read the information sheet provided carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide not to take part, there will be no disadvantage to you, and I thank you for considering our request. If you decide to participate, I thank you, please sign and date the form below.

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: (Please circle) Male

Female

Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

Current place of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous place of study: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Future place of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time in New Zealand so far: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

- |     |  |     |   |    |   |
|-----|--|-----|---|----|---|
| 1.1 | I have read and I understand the Information Sheet for volunteers who are taking part in the study: <b>Views of International Students on completing their Tertiary Education in New Zealand</b> which could help make a better study environment for new students.              | Yes | <input style="width: 30px; height: 50px;" type="checkbox"/> | No | <input style="width: 30px; height: 50px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 1.2 | I have had the opportunity to discuss this study and my questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.  | Yes | <input style="width: 30px; height: 50px;" type="checkbox"/> | No | <input style="width: 30px; height: 50px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 1.3 | I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice), and that I may withdraw from the study at any time during the group meeting. I understand that withdrawing from the study will in no way affect my relationship with my school, polytechnic or university. | Yes | <input style="width: 30px; height: 50px;" type="checkbox"/> | No | <input style="width: 30px; height: 50px;" type="checkbox"/> |

- 1.4 I understand that I may decline to answer any particular questions in the study. Yes  No
- 1.5 I agree to provide information to the researcher under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the Information Sheet. Yes  No
- 1.6 I have had time to consider whether to take part in the study. Yes  No
- 1.7 I consent to conversations in the focus group being voice recorded. Yes  No
- 1.8 I wish to review a copy of my answers. Yes  No
- 1.9 I would like the researcher to send me a copy of the results. Yes  No

*There will be a long delay between data collection and publication of the results.*

I \_\_\_\_\_ (full name) agree to take part in the study.

Date:

Signature:

Name and contact number of  
researcher:

Scott Henderson - 021511151

Name and contact number of  
supervisor:

Dr. Judy Hunter/Senior Lecturer  
School of Curriculum and Pedagogy  
Faculty of Education/University of  
Waikato  
Private Bag 3105  
Hamilton 3240  
New Zealand  
E: [jmhunter@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:jmhunter@waikato.ac.nz)  
T: + 64 7 838 4466 x7712

Signature:

Date:

Thank you for being part of this research. Please keep a copy of this for you records.

## 4: Participant Information – Surveys

### *Participant Information Sheet Survey*

#### **Survey – Views of International Students on completing their Tertiary Education in New Zealand**

##### **Information for participants:**

Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, we thank you. There are no right or wrong answers as we are only interested in your point of view. If you decide not to take part, there will be no disadvantage to you, and we thank you for considering our request. The completion of this online survey will be taken as your consent to participate.

##### **Information collected and planned use:**

The aim of the research is to find out what the main motivating factors are for international students to continue on to tertiary studies in New Zealand, or why some students just prefer to return home. If the motivating factors are better understood, the benefit is that it should be possible for tertiary institutions to create a more attractive environment for students to stay and study in New Zealand. Results of the survey will form the basis of a three paper thesis as part of a Master's in Education for the lead researcher, Scott Henderson.

The study may also be used in publications, reports and presentations. Your answers will be anonymous so it will not be possible to review or change your results once they are submitted. The researcher will own the thesis, copyright and any scholarly publications and/or presentations that arise from it.

##### **Requirements:**

This online survey should take around **10-15 minutes** to complete.

Participants are encouraged to be honest about your views on continuing your studies in New Zealand. Questions will be formulated around three broad areas: Reasons for coming to New Zealand initially, motivations to stay in New Zealand and motivations to return home.

**Anonymity/Confidentiality:**

The survey is anonymous, so no individual will be able to be recognised from their responses. The results will be confidential and no real names of individuals or schools will be disclosed during the study.

**Right to withdraw:**

Participation in this survey is voluntary. You have the right to decline to participate. As the survey is anonymous, once your responses have been submitted, it will not be possible to review, edit or withdraw your responses.

**Accessing the information:**

If you have any queries about this questionnaire, if you have any disputes, or if you wish to see a copy of the results, please contact the researcher: Scott Henderson, (youcandoit88@hotmail.com) or the Supervisor Dr Judy Hunter, University of Waikato (jmhunter@waikato.ac.nz). A copy of the thesis will be lodged in the UOW Research Commons Database. <http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/>

Thank you very much for considering our request to be part of this study.

Yours Sincerely,

Scott Henderson

Researcher

021511151

## **5. Introductory letter/Permission form – Educational Institution – Focus Groups**

### **Focus group**

#### **Should I stay or should I go now?**

#### **Views of international high school students on completing their tertiary education in New Zealand**

**Dear .....**

I am conducting research as part of my Masters in Education. The aim of the research is to find out what the main motivating factors are for international students to continue on to tertiary studies in New Zealand, or why some students just prefer to return home. Due to my interest in international students through my work with exchange students over the last 12 years and my recent role in domestic student recruitment, if the motivating factors are better understood, the benefit is that it should be possible for tertiary institutions to create a more attractive environment for students to stay and study in New Zealand. The findings should also be useful to schools to inform them on the main motivators to bring students to New Zealand initially and what factors would encourage them to stay longer.

I would like to conduct a focus group during a lunch break at the beginning of Term 4, 2015, with 6-8 of your senior international students who are in the process of considering their study options for next year. It will be a **one hour** group conversation which will be recorded. Questions will be formulated around four

broad areas: Reasons to leave home, reasons for coming to New Zealand initially, motivations to stay in New Zealand and motivations to return home. Informed Consent will be sought from each individual participant. I would like to liaise with the international department to help me identify potential participants.

If you have any queries about this interview process, or if you wish to see a copy of the results, please contact me: Scott Henderson, (youcandoit88@hotmail.com) or my Supervisor Dr Judy Hunter, University of Waikato (jmhunter@waikato.ac.nz). A copy of the thesis will be lodged in the UOW Research Commons Database. <http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/>

**If you are happy for me to liaise with your international department, please sign the permission form below, and retain one copy of this information for your records.**

Thank you very much for considering our request to be part of this study.

Yours Sincerely,

Scott Henderson

Researcher

021511151

**I give my permission for Scott Henderson to make contact with my international department and conduct this research.**

**Name of School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact person for international students:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Contact number:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your assistance in this research.**

**Please return this form to:**

Scott Henderson

15 Grange Rd

Tauranga 3110

**Or scan and email to:** [youcandoit88@hotmail.com](mailto:youcandoit88@hotmail.com)

## **6: Introductory letter / Permission form – Educational Institution – Online Surveys**

### **Online surveys**

**Should I stay or should I go now?**

**Views of international high school students on completing their tertiary education in New Zealand**

**Dear .....**

I am conducting research as part of my Masters in Education. The aim of the research is to find out what the main motivating factors are for international students to continue on to tertiary studies in New Zealand, or why some students just prefer to return home. Due to my interest in international students through my work with exchange students over the last 12 years and my recent role in domestic student recruitment, if the motivating factors are better understood, the benefit is that it should be possible for tertiary institutions to create a more attractive environment for students to stay and study in New Zealand. The findings should also be useful to schools to inform them on the main motivators to bring students to New Zealand initially and what factors would encourage them to stay longer.

I would like the electronic link to be sent to senior international students in beginning of Term 1, 2016, for completion. It could even be an exercise in an ESOL

class. Two classes per school should be a large enough sample. This survey is a follow up to some initial focus groups conducted with international students. The survey is anonymous, so no individual will be able to be recognised from their responses. The results will be confidential and no real names of individuals or schools will be disclosed during the study. I would like to liaise with the international department to help me administer the survey.

If you have any queries about this process, or if you wish to see a copy of the results, please contact me: Scott Henderson, (youcandoit88@hotmail.com) or my Supervisor Dr Judy Hunter, University of Waikato (jmhunter@waikato.ac.nz). A copy of the thesis will be lodged in the UOW Research Commons Database. <http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/>

**If you are happy for me to liaise with your international department, please sign the permission form below, and retain one copy of this information for your records.**

Thank you very much for considering our request to be part of this study.

Yours Sincerely,

Scott Henderson

Researcher

021511151

**I give my permission for Scott Henderson to make contact with my international department and conduct this research.**

**Name of School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact person for international students:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your assistance in this research.**

**Please return this form to:**

Scott Henderson

15 Grange Rd

Tauranga 3110

**Or scan and email to:** [youcandoit88@hotmail.com](mailto:youcandoit88@hotmail.com)

## 7: Questions – Focus groups

### Focus group Questions – Should I stay or should I go now?

#### Push – Home Country

- 1) Why did you decide to leave home and study overseas?
- 2) What people had the biggest influence on your decision?

**Ideas:** How much influence did **family / agents / friends / political or social factors** have on your decision?

**Insurance question:** Are there any other reasons you left home?

#### Pull – New Zealand

- 3) Why did you choose New Zealand?
- 4) What do you like about studying in New Zealand?
- 5) What would encourage you to stay to continue your higher studies in New Zealand?

**Ideas:** What influence does New Zealand **lifestyle / environment / freedom / safety / reputation of school / support from school / friends and relationships** have on keeping you in New Zealand?

**Insurance question:** Are there any other reasons which could keep you in New Zealand to continue your studies?

#### Push - New Zealand

- 6) What don't you like about living in New Zealand? (What is challenging or difficult?)
- 7) What don't you like about studying in New Zealand? (What is challenging or difficult?)

**Ideas:** How much does: **loneliness / family and friends / home sickness / food / cost of living / cost of study / learning styles / school environment / racism / visa problems** influence your decision to leave New Zealand?

**Insurance question:** Are there any other things about New Zealand which make life and study hard for you?

**Pull – Home Country**

- 8) What are your biggest reasons to return to your home country?
- 9) What are your biggest reasons to study back in your home country?

**Ideas:** How much influence does: **home culture / food / job or study opportunities / family and friends / lifestyle / finances** have on your decision to return home.

- 10) **Are there any final motivating factors you can share about choosing your future study destination?**

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME

## 8: Questions – Surveys

### Should I stay or should I go now - International students' views on studying in New Zealand

Dear student,

My name is Scott Henderson and this survey is part of my Masters in Education thesis. I'm interested in your views about studying in New Zealand.

There are no right or wrong answers. I am just interested in your point of view. The survey should take about 15 minutes to complete and no one will know who you are once the answers are collected.

You must be **16 years or older** to complete this study.

If you have any questions regarding this survey you can contact me on my email [sah53@students.waikato.ac.nz](mailto:sah53@students.waikato.ac.nz)

To take part in the survey, please click on the NEXT button.

Please make sure that you answer ALL questions.

There are 28 questions in this survey.

#### **About you:**

#### **In which region are you studying? \***

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Bay of Plenty
- Waikato

#### **What is your gender? \***

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Male
- Female

**Your age: \***

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19+

**Which country are you from? \***

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Brazil
- China
- Germany
- Hong Kong
- India
- Italy
- Japan
- Korea
- Taiwan
- Thailand
- Other

**How long have you been studying in New Zealand? \***

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- I've just arrived at this school
- Less than a year
- 1 - 2 years
- 2 - 3 years
- 3 - 4 years
- 4 - 5 years
- 5 years and over

**Why you decided to leave home and study overseas.**

**Please tick the box saying how much you agree with each statement below:**

**I came to study in New Zealand because: \***

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	<b>1 = strongly disagree</b>	<b>2 = disagree</b>	<b>3 = neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>4 = agree</b>	<b>5 = strongly agree</b>
<b>it is a safe country</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>it is clean and beautiful</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I will improve my English</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>there are not too many international students</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>it was recommended to me as a good place to study</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>the education system is better than back home</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>there is a wide range of</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

1 = strongly disagree      2 = disagree      3 = neither agree nor disagree      4 = agree      5 = strongly agree

subjects available

I was failing in the education system at home

I was not satisfied with the education system at home

Please write below any OTHER REASONS that made you decide to come to New Zealand to study.

Please write your answer here:

How do you think studying in New Zealand will help with your future?

Please tick the box to say how much you agree with each of the following statements: \*

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

1 = strongly disagree      2 = disagree      3 = neither agree nor disagree      4 = agree      5 = strongly agree

Universities / Polytechnics back HOME like their

1 = strongly disagree      2 = disagree      3 = neither agree nor disagree      4 = agree      5 = strongly agree

students to have studied in an English speaking country.

Universities / Polytechnics in OTHER COUNTRIES

I want to STUDY in like their students to have studied in an English speaking country.

Universities / Polytechnics in NZ like their students

to have studied in NZ.

Employers at HOME like their

employees to have overseas qualifications

(e.g.

1 = strongly disagree      2 = disagree      3 = neither agree nor disagree      4 = agree      5 = strongly agree

certificates,  
diplomas,  
degrees)

Employers in  
OTHER  
COUNTRIES

I want to  
WORK like  
their  
employees to  
have  
qualifications  
from an  
English  
speaking  
country.

Employers in  
NZ like their  
employees to  
have  
qualifications  
from NZ.

**Please write below any OTHER REASONS why you think studying in New Zealand will help your future.**

Please write your answer here:

**How much influence (or help) did each of the following persons have on your decision to study in New Zealand?**

**Please tick the box to say how much influence each of these people had on your decision: \***

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	No influence at all	Very little influence	Some influence	A lot of influence	The biggest influence
Myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friends / School friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Education agent in my home country	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher(s) in my home country	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
International education manager from my current NZ school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Your future study plans**

**After high school in New Zealand are you planning to: \***

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Stay in New Zealand to study at University / Polytechnic
- Return home to study at University / Polytechnic

- Go to another country to study
- Go straight to work
- I don't know yet
- Other

**Where in New Zealand do you plan to study? \***

**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

Answer was 'Stay in New Zealand to study at University / Polytechnic' at question '11 [11]' (After high school in New Zealand are you planning to:)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- University of Waikato – Hamilton
- Wintec – Hamilton
- University of Waikato – Tauranga
- Bay of Plenty Polytechnic – Tauranga
- Auckland University
- AUT University
- Massey University
- Victoria University
- Otago University
- Canterbury University
- I haven't decided yet
- Other

**When did you decide to continue your studies in New Zealand? \***

**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

Answer was 'University of Waikato – Hamilton' *or* 'Wintec - Hamilton' *or* 'University of Waikato – Tauranga' *or* 'Bay of Plenty Polytechnic – Tauranga' *or* 'Auckland University' *or* 'AUT University' *or* 'Massey University' *or* 'Victoria University' *or* 'Otago University' *or* 'Canterbury University' *or* 'I haven't decided yet' *or* 'Other' at question '12 [11A1]' (Where in New Zealand do you plan to study?)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- I decided before I arrived in New Zealand
- I decided after I arrived in New Zealand

**What are your main 3 REASONS to STAY in New Zealand to continue your studies? \***

**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

Answer was 'I decided after I arrived in New Zealand *or* 'I decided before I arrived in New Zealand' at question '13 [11A2]' (When did you decide to continue your studies in New Zealand?)

Please write your answer here:

**When did you decide to continue your studies at HOME? \***

**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

Answer was 'Return home to study at University / Polytechnic' at question '11 [11]' (After high school in New Zealand are you planning to:)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- I decided before I arrived in New Zealand
- I decided after I arrived in New Zealand

**What are your MAIN 3 REASONS for returning HOME to continue your studies? \***

**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

Answer was 'I decided before I arrived in New Zealand' *or* 'I decided after I arrived in New Zealand' at question '15 [11B1]' (When did you decide to continue your studies at HOME?)

Please write your answer here:

**In which country do you plan to study? \***

**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

Answer was 'Go to another country to study' at question '11 [11]' (After high school in New Zealand are you planning to:)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Australia
- America
- Canada
- UK
- I don't know yet
- Other

**Why did you choose this country to continue your studies rather than studying New Zealand? (Please tick ALL that apply) \***

**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

Answer was 'Australia' or 'America' or 'Canada' or 'UK' or 'Other' at question '17 [11C1]' (In which country do you plan to study?)

Please choose **all** that apply:

- It has BETTER QUALITY higher EDUCATION than New Zealand
- Qualifications from this county are more RESPECTED in my HOME COUNTRY
- Qualifications from this country are more RESPECTED INTERNATIONALLY
- It is a BETTER place to LIVE than New Zealand
- It has CHEAPER study FEES than New Zealand
- It is CHEAPER to LIVE in than New Zealand
- The qualification I want to study for is NOT AVAILABLE in New Zealand
- Other:

**When did you decide to continue your studies in another overseas country? \***

**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

Answer was 'Australia' *or* 'America' *or* 'Canada' *or* 'UK' *or* 'I don't know yet' *or* 'Other' at question '17 [11C1]' (In which country do you plan to study?)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- I decided before I arrived in New Zealand
- I decided after I arrived in New Zealand

**WHAT do you plan to STUDY (e.g. engineering, education, carpentry etc.) overseas? \***

**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

Answer was 'I decided before I arrived in New Zealand' *or* 'I decided after I arrived in New Zealand' at question '19 [11C3]' (When did you decide to continue your studies in another overseas country?)

Please write your answer here:

**Where do you plan to work? \***

**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

Answer was 'Go straight to work' at question '11 [11]' (After high school in New Zealand are you planning to:)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- In my home country
- In New Zealand
- In some other country

**When did you decide to go straight to work after high school? \***

**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

Answer was 'In my home country' *or* 'In New Zealand' *or* 'In some other country' at question '21 [11D1]' (Where do you plan to work?)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- I decided before I arrived in New Zealand
- I decided after I arrived in New Zealand

**Which of the reasons listed below would help you decide to stay in New Zealand and continue your studies at University or Polytechnic? (Please tick ALL reasons that apply to you.) \***

**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

Answer was 'I don't know yet' at question '11 [11]' (After high school in New Zealand are you planning to:)

Please choose **all** that apply:

- If the right DIPLOMA / DEGREE was available to me
- If someone would help me decide on WHAT to study
- If someone from the University or Polytechnic would come and explain the STUDY OPTIONS to me
- If there was good ACCOMMODATION for international students
- If the study FEES were lower than what they are now
- If there were SCHOLARSHIPS available to international students
- If there was good ACADEMIC SUPPORT for international students
- If there was good PERSONAL SUPPORT for international students
- If I knew the New Zealand qualification would give me a high chance of EMPLOYMENT in New Zealand
- If I knew the New Zealand qualification would give me a high chance of EMPLOYMENT at HOME
- If I knew the New Zealand qualification would give me a high chance of EMPLOYMENT in ANOTHER COUNTRY
- If I knew the New Zealand qualification would give me a high chance of getting New Zealand RESIDENCY
- If the University or Polytechnic had a GOOD INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION

- NONE of these things would motivate me to stay in New Zealand to continue my studies
- Other:

**What do you think of Tertiary Education (Universities, Polytechnics etc.) in New Zealand? \***

Please choose **all** that apply:

- It is CHEAPER to study in New Zealand than in other countries
- It is BETTER QUALITY EDUCATION in New Zealand than back home
- There is a WIDER RANGE OF SUBJECTS available than back home
- It is EASY TO GET INTO New Zealand Universities/Polytechnics with NCEA from New Zealand high schools
- New Zealand qualifications (diploma, degree etc.) are respected by EMPLOYERS IN MY HOME COUNTRY
- New Zealand qualifications (diploma, degree etc.) are respected by EMPLOYERS INTERNATIONALLY
- New Zealand offers a GOOD STUDY ENVIRONMENT for international students
- I would consider getting my DEGREE though a POLYTECHNIC
- I would only want my DEGREE to be from a UNIVERSITY
- Other:

Please tick all the boxes which you agree with:

**Studying at Polytechnic or University in New Zealand is attractive to me because: \***

Please choose **all** that apply:

- I can achieve good results since there is less competition than back home
- I am used to the New Zealand study style
- Studying in English is no problem for me

- My friends are here
- My family members are here
- It would help me avoid military service back home
- It would help me to get New Zealand residency
- NONE of these reasons apply to me
- Other:

Please tick all the boxes which you agree with:

**What do you think of Tertiary Education (Universities, Polytechnics etc.) in your home country? \***

Please choose **all** that apply:

- University/Polytechnic fees are CHEAPER at home than in New Zealand
- The University/Polytechnics at home offer BETTER QUALITY EDUCATION than in New Zealand
- There are BETTER JOB OPPORTUNITIES AT HOME with a qualification from home
- There are BETTER JOB OPPORTUNITIES overseas with a qualification from home
- It is easier to study in a FAMILIAR CULTURE (food, customs etc.)
- It is easier to study with the SUPPORT OF FAMILY back home
- It is easier to study in my NATIVE LANGUAGE
- UNIVERSITIES at home DON'T ACCEPT New Zealand NCEA for university entrance.
- Other:

Please tick all the boxes you agree with:

**How happy are you with your student life in New Zealand so far? \***

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- I am not happy at all
- I am not happy
- I am neither happy or unhappy
- I am happy
- I am very happy

Make a comment on your choice here:

**Please write any other comments about why you WANT to or DO NOT want to continue into tertiary studies in New Zealand in the space below.**

Please write your answer here:

Thank you very much for completing this survey.

Have a great day!