



South Asia Education Strategy 2020 - 2025

1. Current Australia Education Brand

Australia has witnessed significant growth in enrolments from South Asia over the past few years and it is often suggested that those students are choosing Australia because of the reputation for the quality of our education and our lifestyle. Yet there continues to be debate as to whether enough is being done in a coordinated way that will help boost Australia's reputation as a destination of first choice for international students.

An Indian Economic Strategy to 2035, commissioned by the Australian Government and delivered by Peter Varghese AO, Chancellor, University of Queensland, suggests that the numbers of Indian parents now willing to pay for their children to study abroad is increasing year on year. The report also referenced the need for '*consistent and deliberate branding to unite the fragmentary approach to education marketing in India.*'

It is widely acknowledged that the recruitment of international students is becoming a priority for many of Australia's competitors. Australia is well placed to develop a national recruitment strategy to ensure Australia's competitiveness and have an edge in the competition for international students.

When considering the above statements:

- Who do you think is responsible for branding the Australian education sector's value proposition and promoting the Australian Education brand?
- How can the different education sectors work more collaboratively for the purposes of a national strategy?
- What are the challenges and dynamics that you see will face the region in the next 5 years? Politically, socially, culturally – the dynamic is changing – how can Australian education providers be leading on being ahead of the curve?
- Can AAERI, as a peak body, assist in the promotion of Australia by becoming a student friendly brand by conducting fairs or other forms of promotion?
- What role do you think AAERI can play in supporting a national recruitment strategy?

2. Marketing and Recruitment in South Asia

It is recognised that student recruitment is only one, but a very important part, of internationalisation, however, it has been suggested that student recruitment, and the pressure to continually grow new enrolments, is the major driving force within the education sectors' approach to 'internationalisation' in South Asia.

Austrade’s global Digital Engagement Review (Rec 6.2 of the India Economic Strategy to 2035) sees digital channels speaking to Indian students and others in their native language. In addition, Recommendation 6.1.5 in the *An Indian Economic Strategy to 2035* outlines the need to ensure quality in marketing by all education providers in India.

When considering this:

- How do you view the role of ‘Technology’ and social media in the current and future recruitment of students?
- How will this influence the work of education agents and how will it impact the traditional methods of student recruitment, particularly if institutions opt to recruit through ‘on line’ systems?
- In India, there has been a significant increase of late in the number of educational providers opening ‘in-country offices.’ However, not all of these offices may be legal entities, nor do they meet the stringent requirements of the Indian Government. Does this pose a reputational risk for our sector?
- Franchised campuses are being established by Australian Universities, particularly in India. Some of these programs are not recognised, yet institutions are pursuing TNE in India and South Asia with mixed results so far. What are your thoughts on this?

3. The Role of Agents

Australia now educates close to seven hundred thousand International students in universities, TAFE and Private VET colleges, Language Centres and high schools and a significant proportion of those students have come through agents – for some source countries it is close to, if not over, 70 per cent.

Professor John Wood, in his February 2019 article in the Australian *“What lies ahead in the evolving world of international study”* speculated that “Education agents will consolidate and their move into providing English and pre-university programs will expand their digital strategies”. He added, “efforts to replace agents with direct channels largely will fail, especially in the emerging markets with most key Australian universities still reliant on these networks”.

Most education institutions plan (sometimes, hope) for a recruitment strategy that will deliver diversification of the student body, yet Australian campuses are still largely representative of two countries, China and India. The reality is that both countries have the largest populations and the greatest number of citizens looking for study overseas

When considering these statements:

- To what extent do education agents play an important part in supporting the objectives of Australia’s education institutions recruitment strategies?

- What could be the future role of education agents within South Asia and Australia in terms of:
 - diversification of courses;
 - level of study as well as looking to different cities and region in Australia?
 - Changes to operational models in the next five years?
 - The benefit of education agents to large sectors of the Indian and South Asia community
 - Education agents as a collective being strengthened, reduced or consolidated within bigger and stronger agent brands?
 - An increase or reduction in competition? Or do you see in spite of digital strategies, that the role of an education agent will expand?
- The growth in the TAFE sector has been disappointing, yet the private VET sector has grown significantly in their internationalisation and outreach to a range of South Asian countries. What do you see as the major challenges facing TAFE in international markets and do you have any suggestions that could elevate the TAFE brand and its attractiveness to international students?
- Recent behaviour by some onshore agents and some providers has again raised the issue of unethical practices in the recruitment of international students who are already enrolled in a course of study at another education provider. What are your thoughts on this and how do we combat these practices?
- How effective do you think AAERI can be in ensuring that AAERI members behave in a professional and ethical manner consistently.

4 Return on Investment / Value for Money

The decision that parents and students make to study overseas is influenced by a variety of factors, including:

- lack of opportunity in the home country
- an opportunity to expand horizons and gain enriching cross-cultural life experiences
- the belief that studying overseas and possessing a qualification from an overseas university or institution will enhance the student's career aspiration and opportunities, and
- Opportunities to live and work abroad during and after their studies.

In considering the above statement:

- Do you think our education institutions provide a high-quality experience for our international students? Are they graduating with a set of skills and attributes that prepare them for a career in Australia, back home, or other countries?
- How competitive do you think Australia's value for money proposition and return on investment for a student and family is in comparison to other competing countries?

- As tuition fees are growing, and the number of international students enrolled across the different sectors is also growing, are the infrastructure and quality of student support services delivered on campuses keeping pace with this growth?
- How well do you think on-campus careers services are meeting the needs of international students and do you think there is any role that AAERI could take to help facilitate job placements for students in Australia or back in South Asia?

5. Government Policies

Government policy in source countries and also destination countries impact upon the movement of students across borders.

“Increasing the recognition in India of Australian qualifications will give a significant boost to the education relationship and should be a priority for the Australian Government” (Peter Varghese Report to the Australian government, *An India Economic Strategy to 2035*). To what extent do you agree with this statement?

- Institutions will often refer to the NOOSR Guidelines to establish the recognition of Indian qualifications in Australia. Based on your own experience do you find the NOOSR Guidelines:
 - Accurate and helpful;
 - Useful but also look to other sources for verification as well as own experience;
 - Not helpful and/or needs to be updated?
- The ongoing issue of the non-recognition of Australian Diploma and Foundation Pathway Qualifications continues to be an obstacle, for Indian students considering enrolling in these programs.
 - In your opinion, do you see this as a major issue or one that will likely address itself through time as further mutual recognition of qualifications are agreed?
- Given that education agents are sometimes confused with migration agents, what role do you see AAERI having in separating these two models?
- We are interested in the Post study work experience. In your opinion:
 - Are students taking advantage of this or are they using it mainly as a way to migrate?
 - Are there data sets AAERI can review to understand the mix better.

6. International Student Associations

- What role can the Australian Association of International Students - Bangladesh/India/Nepal and Sri Lanka Chapters play in safeguarding the reputation of the Australian Education Sector in South Asia?

A Final Question

- Are there any specific concerns you would like to address, offer solutions or pose challenges to the Panel?

Please email your submission to southasiareport2025@aaeri.in

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