

**THE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT
OF INTERNATIONAL ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITIES
AT AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES**

By

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**A thesis
submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

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CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of candidate

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title	Page
Certificate	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Contents	iv
Tables and Figures	xi
Abstract	xiv
Chapter 1 – Introduction	
1.1 Background to the Research	1
1.2 Research Problem and Questions	6
1.3 Justification for the Research	8
1.4 Methodology	10
1.5 Outline of the Thesis	14
1.6 Definitions	15
1.7 Delimitations and Limitations	18
1.8 Key Assumptions	19
1.9 Conclusion	20
Chapter 2 – Literature Review	
2.1 Introduction	21
2.2 International Education Management Literature	23
2.2.1 The Need for Effective Strategic Management	23
2.2.2 Models of International Education Management	27
The Davies Model	27
The van Dijk and Meijer Model	31
The Rudzki Approach	34
The Knight Model	40
2.2.3 University International Entrepreneurialism – Suggested Characteristics of Effective Management	42

2.2.4	Structures for Managing International Entrepreneurialism	46
2.2.5	International Education Management – Issues and Problems	48
2.2.5	Contributions from the International Education Management Field to the Study’s Conceptual Framework	51
2.3	Strategic Management Literature	53
2.3.1	Mintzberg’s Contribution	53
2.3.2	Miller’s Contribution – Organisational Learning	57
2.3.3	Thompson & Strickland’s Contribution – Diagnostic Models	58
2.3.4	Organisational Life Cycle Models	65
2.3.5	Strategic Management in Turbulent Environments	67
2.3.6	A Guiding Conceptual Model – Integrating the Key Concepts Arising in the Primary (International Education Management) and Secondary (Strategic Management) Fields	71
2.4	University and Public Sector Entrepreneurialism Literature	73
2.4.1	Public Sector Entrepreneurialism	74
2.4.2	Differences between Public Sector and Business Entrepreneurialism	75
2.4.3	Characteristics of Effective Public Sector Entrepreneurialism	77
2.4.4	The Nature of University Entrepreneurialism	78
2.4.5	Differences between University and Business Entrepreneurship	82
2.4.6	Characteristics of Effective University Entrepreneurship	85
2.4.7	University Entrepreneurialism – Criticisms and Responses	87
2.4.8	Implications for this Study	94
2.5	International Business Literature	95
2.5.1	The Internationalisation Process Model	95
2.5.2	The Market Entry Model	100
	Market Screening and Selection	101
	Performance Evaluation and Response	104
2.5.3	Managing International Strategic Alliances	106
2.5.4	Implications for this Study	113

2.6 Conclusion	114
Chapter 3 – Institutional, Sectoral and Policy Context	
3.1 Introduction	115
3.2 Sectoral Context	115
3.3 The International Student Context	115
3.4 The Public Policy Context	121
The Aid Era	121
The Trade Era	123
The Internationalisation Era	125
The Differentiation Era	125
3.5 Strategic Approaches and International Convergence	126
in Trends and Strategies	
3.5.1 Strategic Approaches	126
International Convergence	132
3.6 Conclusion	135
Chapter 4 – Methodology	
4.1 Introduction	136
4.2 Justification for the Paradigm and Methodology	136
4.2.1 Justification for the Realist Paradigm	136
4.2.2 Justification for the use of Qualitative Methodologies	139
4.2.3 Justification for the use of Case Studies	142
4.3 Research Procedures – Data Collection Strategies	144
4.3.1 Case Selection	144
4.3.2 Selection of Units of Analysis	148
4.3.3 Site Visits	149
4.3.4 Interviews	152
Nature of Interviews Conducted	152
Strengths and Weaknesses of Interviews	154
Recording of Interviews	155

4.3.5 Documents	156
The Nature of Documents as Case Study Evidence	156
Documents Used in this Study	156
4.3.6 Direct Observation	157
4.3.7 Design and Piloting of the Instruments	158
4.4 Research Procedures – Data Analysis Strategies	160
4.4.1 The Nature of Qualitative Data Analysis	160
4.4.2 Phases in the Analysis Process	161
4.4.3 Analysis of Interviews, Documents and Observations	162
4.4.4 Use of NUDIST in Analysis	163
4.4.5 Piloting of Analysis Techniques	165
4.5 Research Quality Issues	165
4.5.1 Determining Quality in Qualitative Research	165
4.5.2 Reliability and Construct and Internal Validity	168
4.5.3 Generalisability of Findings	171
4.6 Ethical Considerations	173
4.7 Conclusion	176
Chapter 5 – Results – Individual Case Studies	
5.1 Introduction	178
5.2 Case 1 – Reid University	179
5.2.1 Case Description	179
5.2.2 Strategies	181
5.2.3 Rationales for Strategies and Modes	185
5.2.4 Structures	188
5.2.5 Systems	192
5.2.6 Culture	194
5.2.7 Impacts	195
Impacts on Core Values	195
Impacts of Faculty of Business Dominance	197
5.2.8 Organisational Learning and Leadership	198

5.2.9 Case Summary	200
5.3 Case 2 – Hickling University	203
5.3.1 Case Description	203
5.3.2 Strategies	204
5.3.3 Rationales for Strategies and Modes	208
5.3.4 Structures	211
5.3.5 Systems	216
5.3.6 Culture	218
5.3.7 Impacts	220
Impacts on Core Values	220
Impacts of Faculty of Business Dominance	221
5.3.8 Organisational Learning and Leadership	223
5.3.9 Case Summary	225
5.4 Case 3 – Samuels University	227
5.4.1 Case Description	228
5.4.2 Strategies	228
5.4.3 Rationales for Strategies and Modes	236
5.4.4 Structures	241
5.4.5 Systems	245
5.4.6 Culture	247
5.4.7 Impacts	249
Impacts on Core Values	249
Impacts of Faculty of Business Dominance	251
5.4.8 Organisational Learning and Leadership	253
5.4.9 Case Summary	254
5.5 Case 4 – Parkes University	256
5.5.1 Case Description	256
5.5.2 Strategies	258
5.5.3 Rationales for Strategies and Modes	262
5.5.4 Structures	265
5.5.5 Systems	269

5.5.6 Culture	272
5.5.7 Impacts	275
Impacts on Core Values	275
Impacts of Dominance of Business Departments	276
5.5.8 Organisational Learning and Leadership	277
5.5.9 Case Summary	278
5.6 Case 5 – Wentworth University	281
5.6.1 Case Description	281
5.6.2 Strategies	282
5.6.3 Rationales for Strategies and Modes	286
5.6.4 Structures	290
5.6.5 Systems	295
5.6.6 Culture	299
5.6.7 Impacts	301
Impacts on Core Values	301
Impacts of Faculty of Business Dominance	303
5.6.8 Organisational Learning and Leadership	304
5.6.9 Case Summary	306
5.7 Conclusion	308
Chapter 6 – Cross Case Analysis and Theoretical Synthesis	
6.1 Introduction	310
6.2 Strategies	311
6.3 Rationales for Modes and Strategies	314
6.4 Structures	317
6.5 Systems	320
6.6 Culture	323
6.7 Impacts on Core Values	324
6.8 Impacts of Faculty of Business Dominance	326
6.9 Organisational Learning and Leadership	329
6.10 Cross Case Summary	332

6.11 Theoretical Synthesis	335
6.11.1 International Education Management Literature	335
6.11.2 Strategic Management Literature	343
6.11.3 University and Public Sector Entrepreneurialism Literature	353
6.11.4 International Business Literature	357
6.12 Conclusion	362
Chapter 7 – Conclusions	
7.1 Introduction	364
7.2 Conclusions for each Research Question	364
7.2.1 Research Question 1	364
7.2.2 Research Question 2	365
7.2.3 Research Question 3	366
7.2.4 Research Question 4	370
7.2.5 Research Question 5	371
7.2.6 Research Question 6	374
7.3 Conclusion to the Research Problem	378
7.4 Implications for Theory	381
7.5 Implications for Policy and Practice	386
7.6 Limitations	388
7.7 Implications for Further Research	389
Appendix A	392
Bibliography	405

TABLES AND FIGURES

Title	Page
Figure 2.1	23
Figure 2.2	28
Figure 2.3	29
Figure 2.4	32
Figure 2.5	36
Figure 2.6	37
Figure 2.7	39
Figure 2.8	41
Table 2.1	43
Figure 2.9	61
Figure 2.10	62
Figure 2.11	66
Figure 2.12	68
Figure 2.13	97
Figure 2.14	100
Figure 2.15	101
Table 2.2	112
Table 3.1	117
Table 3.2	118
Table 3.3	118
Table 3.4	120

	International Students and by Revenue from International Student Fees, 1998	
Table 4.1	Site Visits	149
Table 5.1	Analytical Summary of Case Findings for Reid University	201
Table 5.2	Analytical Summary of Case Findings for Hickling University	225
Figure 5.1	Samuels International Strategy	234
Figure 5.2	Traditional International Strategies	235
Figure 5.3	Strategies of Highly International Universities	235
Table 5.3	Analytical Summary of Case Findings for Samuels University	254
Table 5.4	Analytical Summary of Case Findings for Parkes University	279
Table 5.5	Analytical Summary of Case Findings for Wentworth University	306
Table 6.1	Cross-Case Summary Table – Strategies	311
Table 6.2	Cross-Case Summary Table – Rationales	314
Table 6.3	Cross-Case Summary Table – Structures	318
Table 6.4	Cross-Case Summary Table – Systems	321
Table 6.5	Cross-Case Summary Table – Culture	323
Table 6.6	Cross-Case Summary Table – Impacts on Core Values	325
Table 6.7	Cross-Case Summary Table – Impacts of Faculty of Business Dominance	327
Table 6.8	Cross-Case Summary Table – Organisational Learning and Leadership	330
Table 6.9	Theoretical Summary – International Education Management Literature	343
Table 6.10	Theoretical Summary – Strategic Management Literature	353

Table 6.11	Theoretical Summary – University and Public Sector Entrepreneurialism Literature	357
Table 6.12	Theoretical Summary – International Business Literature	362
Table 6.13	Case Theoretical Summaries	363
Figure 7.1	Structural Tensions in the Management of International Entrepreneurial Activities at Australian Universities	368
Figure 6.2	Strategic Advantage Model of Internationalisation	382

ABSTRACT

Universities around the world are increasingly focusing on entrepreneurial activities. In Australia, the growth of international entrepreneurial activities has resulted in the creation of a billion-dollar export-oriented sector. These activities include the recruitment of international students to Australian campuses, the development of Australian university campuses in offshore locations, and the delivery of Australian degree programs at both onshore and offshore locations in partnership with universities, professional associations and private corporations. Australian universities currently receive on average around seven percent of revenues from these sources, with some depending on international entrepreneurialism for as much as one-third of revenues. Managing these activities in an efficient, effective and sustainable manner has thus become critically important to virtually every institution in the Australian higher education sector.

Long dependent on government funding, Australian universities have found the rise of international entrepreneurialism a significant shift. As is the case when businesses become international, universities are faced with the need to manage the complexities, risks and challenges associated with international operations. To date, little empirical work has been undertaken which explores and examines how Australian universities are managing their international entrepreneurial business operations.

The aim of this study is thus to respond to this research gap by exploring how Australian universities, particularly in terms of their Faculties of Business, organise and manage international entrepreneurial activities. The research examines management approaches, practices and processes at five Australian universities. Two are highly international, metropolitan universities recognised around the world as leaders in international entrepreneurialism. Two are smaller, regional institutions, while the fifth university is a medium-

sized metropolitan institution which had in recent times moved aggressively to develop its international activities. Document analysis, observation and interviews with senior institutional managers, academic managers and academics at each university revealed several common themes arising in institutional approaches. These included an emphasis on diversified, offshore growth; a degree of movement towards structural centralisation, particularly in the highly international universities which had been historically highly decentralised; the presence of generally supportive organisational cultures; a perception among academic managers and academics that most international activities remain driven by financial imperatives; the perceived potential for detrimental impacts on academic research arising from increased involvement in international activities; the existence of a common concern among senior institutional managers for the effects of Faculty of Business dominance of international programs in their institutions; a tendency for most organisational learning to be informal, except in the highly international institutions; and a preference for decentralised strategic leadership which included a degree of oversight by internationally experienced senior institutional managers.

A Strategic Advantage Model of Internationalisation is presented representing a theoretical and conceptual synthesis of the findings. Building on previous work undertaken in the field, the model focuses on the need for institutions to achieve best practice and competitive advantage through the leveraging of organisational and strategic competencies, the pursuit of executional advantages, the implementation of strategically decentralised leadership and the development of international business competencies.