



NEW ZEALAND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION
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A worrying trend in the export education industry

Continuing cut-throat recruitment practices lure ever increasing number of prospective international students into a false dreams of work and residency in New Zealand

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New Zealand has seen a steady increase in its international student numbers over the recent years. This has, however, spawned a plethora of unregulated education agencies. Their recruitment practices have been frowned upon by institutions such as the New Zealand Association of Migration and Investment, ISANA, the New Zealand Union of Students' Association, and NZISA. These unregulated agencies do not benefit prospective international students. These agents and agencies sell a false dream of work, visas and residency to prospective students. The focus of these agents is not on bringing students to study in New Zealand, but to prepare them for work and collect a larger fee.

In February 2018, the Pie News calculated that in 2016, an estimation of 38.7% of international students enrolled at a university in New Zealand through education agents. Chris Whelan, Executive Director of Universities New Zealand, places an emphasis on the role of agents as a "key recruitment channel for NZ universities across multiple markets" and that universities do their utmost best to establish relationships with agents that are "high-quality and high-performing".¹ While it may be true that agents benefit Universities and other tertiary providers in recruiting students, this is not always the best for our prospective students. In response NZISA National President Lukas Kristen has stated that "New Zealand institutions must put the wellbeing of

¹ <https://thepienews.com/news/38-intl-students-in-nz-apply-through-agents/?fbclid=IwAR0jKDNOPxaCQRjp5XICgMfvY9SEmTcX2-xIZ9W8pz6tuQTybfTEFokwwlI>.

international students above economic incentives, to ensure the growth of a sustainable export education sector.”

The New Zealand Union of Students’ Association (NZUSA) stands in solidarity with NZISA. NZUSA is deeply concerned for the welfare of international students. Not only are they purchasing false promises with a hefty price tag, they are also often exploited whilst employed in New Zealand, meanwhile having to adjust to a foreign culture. NZUSA President James Ranstead stated that NZUSA “is concerned that recent increases to the export education levy and a decrease in international student support funding drives a greater wedge between domestic and international students. Rhetoric around changing international students away from ‘cash cows’ should be backed up with evidence of positive change, including greater regulation to protect against rogue agents and employers.”

Students who go through agencies when applying for their studies in New Zealand run the risk of being provided incorrect information. This is due to a clear lack of accountability for agents and the unregulated education agency industry. RNZ states that the most common issue is that prospective students are being recommended to do courses that are not suited to their skills and previous education.² Rather than attempting to provide a high-quality education, there are education firms that operate around the prospect of providing students with a pathway to residency in the long run which holds little realism and has proven to adversely affect students. On June 3rd 2018, Stuff published an article on how education firms were using the post-study visa changes to their advantage. According to Stuff, a number of Filipino students recruited by these agents have been reported to fall into depression and considered suicide as an escape after studying low-level courses that failed to help them get a job.³

Additionally, in September 2018, a proposed change to the Export Education Levy was made public. International students are subject to an increase of fees for the lack of discipline on NZQA’s part in ensuring that Private Training Education Institution follow the NZQA qualification standards. Students recruited through agencies who received incorrect advice regarding their potential study pathways were failed by NZQA and had to transfer to other institutions to complete their education.⁴ These students went through immense emotional trauma.

International students are being taking advantage of. Although, the recent post-study work visa changes should hinder unregulated private education agents from recruiting international students unethically, the Government has shown little action to stamp down on their malpractice. This has a negative impact on future international students and the future of the export education sector in New Zealand. It is a serious issue that will continue to affect a high number of international students. The Government must take action. It needs to show the world, through actions against these agents, that it cares for the wellbeing of New Zealand international students and not just about our money.

² https://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/383663/very-shocking-behaviour-of-nz-s-education-recruiters?fbclid=IwAR34OITvY2VDnRYEvchfmOk9E1-7YyBiQ1g7gMQxnu_ibiv0SvjcnJJwfgs.

³ <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/104432849/poor-quality-education-firms-and-offshore-agencies-target-of-poststudy-visa-changes>.

⁴ <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/2018/02/22/91153/export-educators-face-chinese-revolt>;
<https://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/330899/private-tertiary-institution-closed-after-widespread-plagiarism>;
<https://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/323018/nzqa-shuts-down-auckland-tertiary-institution>.

About NZISA

NZISA is the peak international student body and advocate of all international students in New Zealand. We enhance communication and cooperation between the international student communities and the education sector in New Zealand. NZISA aims to explore new standards and to review existing best practice when accommodating, educating and advocating for international students in New Zealand. Stay connected with NZISA on our Facebook page @NZISA2017 and email us at info@nzisa.co.nz.