

Silke Retzer

Business Informatics

Cross-cultural differences between Germany and Australia

Diploma Thesis

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***People will never change completely -
But you are on the way to develop your self
- as everybody has the opportunity to ...***

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ABSTRACT

This study gives an overview about the *Business Informatics* discipline in Australia with a strong focus on *Business Informatics* aspects at Australian universities.

Therefore the different terms *Business Informatics* and *Information Systems (IS)* are defined first in chapter 2.

The approach taken to exploring *Business Informatics* at Australian universities was to conduct intensive interviews with eleven Australian university *IS* academics within the following states and territories of the country:

Queensland, New South Wales, The Australian National Capital and Victoria.

Questions were asked relating to the specific university, the educational *Business Informatics* courses on offer, the organisational structure and cultural aspects within the *Business Informatics* discipline. The results of the interviews are then supported by a strong web and literature review and are shown summarized in chapter 3.

Additional information was obtained by the 13th *Australasian Conference on Information Systems (ACIS)* – from 4th to 6th of December 2002 at the *Victoria University Building in Melbourne*. The conference gave an insight into topics as *Online Learning*, the *IS discipline* at universities and *Approaches for Problem-Based Learning in Information Systems*. These conference papers are summarized presented in chapter 4.

This detailed overview of *IS* in Australian universities can then be compared to the *Business Informatics* discipline in German universities. Several aspects are considered for this in chapter 5 like the educational offers within this discipline area, the organisational structure of *Business Informatics/IS* within universities and cultural aspects in dependence to the structure of the interview guideline. Differences and similarities within the *Business Informatics/IS* discipline in higher education between Germany and Australia are explored, which is the aim of this study. Additional recommendations from the author should be seen as a thought-provoking-impulse and support further development in higher education.

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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

ACS		Australian Computer Society
ACIS		Australasian Conference on Information Systems
ACER		Australian Council for Educational Research
AQF		Australian Qualification Framework
ASCED		Australian Standard Classification of Education
ASCPA		Australian Society of Certified Practicing Accountants
AUTC		Australian University Teaching Committee
BIS		Bachelor of Information Systems
BIT		Bachelor of Information Technology
CS		Computer Science
CSE		Computer Systems Engineering
DEAN		'Deutsch Australisches Netzwerk'
DEST		Department of Education, Science and Training
DEET		Department of Employment, Education and Training
DETYA		Department of Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
ERP		Enterprise Resource Planning
HECS		Higher Education Contribution Scheme
ICT		Information and Communication Technologies
IE(Aust)		Institution of Engineers (Australia)
IELTS		International English Language Test
IES		Institute for the International Education of Students
IS		Information Systems
IT		Information Technology
MBA		Master of Business Administration
MIS		Master of Information Systems
MIT		Master of Information Technology
n.e.c.		not elsewhere classified

PBL		Problem-based Learning
PGradDip		Postgraduate Diploma
PGradCert		Postgraduate Diploma
PhD		Doctor of Philosophy
TAFE		Technical And Further Education
TOEFL		Test of English as a Foreign Language
UK		United Kingdom
US		United States
WWW		World Wide Web
		Visited Australian Universities¹
ANU		The Australian National University
UC		University of Canberra
CQU		Central Queensland University
Deakin		Deakin University
UniMelb		The University of Melbourne
Monash		Monash University
UNSW		The University of New South Wales
UQ		The University of Queensland
QUT		Queensland University of Technology
Sydney		The University of Sydney
UTS		University of Technology Sydney

¹ Abbreviations of Australian universities from the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee,
See <http://www.avcc.edu.au>

1. INTRODUCTION

Recent developments in the German higher education sector indicate, that there is a step towards the introduction of international study programs at German universities like the *Bachelor* and the *Masters Degree*. Yet German universities do not want to disestablish their traditional *Diploma degrees*.

There are already 665 Bachelor degrees and 803 Master degrees at German universities in December 2002 (Goergen 2002).

In Australia, there are numerous *international study programs* established: the *Undergraduate program*, to reach the *Bachelor degree*, and the *Postgraduate program*, to reach a *Masters degree*. In addition to a Bachelor degree, it is possible to do an *Honours Year* that includes coursework and a research project. The *requirement* for commencing a Bachelor degree is a *high school pass* or *its equivalent*. Usually, Bachelor graduates need to be within the *best 20 percent of all graduates* to be able to do an *Honours Year* (Keedy 1999).

For studying a Masters degree, you first need to have a *Bachelor degree*, a *Graduate Diploma* or a *Graduate Certificate*. Studying the Graduate Diploma or the Graduate Certificate at a postgraduate level is possible for people *with industry experience* or with a *Bachelor or equivalent degree*. These degrees provide *graduate specialisation* within a systematic and coherent body of knowledge and develop or broaden vocational knowledge, skills and practical experience in a new or existing field of professional study (DEST 2002).

It is common in Australia that students with a Bachelor degree move straight on to work in industry. All programs of study are designed to be completed either *full-time* or *part-time*.